

DRAWING ROOM
PLAYS.
BY
GRACE LUCE IRWIN.

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DEDICATION

You, Mother, who have ever caught
What joys in laughter's ripples lie,
Who seldom let a mirthful thought
Unsmiled upon to pass you by,
To you these lines that I have done
I give in love as well as fun.

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I.



PREFATORY NOTE

In regard to this farce, as to others contained in the book, the author disclaims all attempt at any object more ambitious than that of preparing something practical and humorous, to suit the needs of the amateur actor, of not too aspiring an ambition. On this account, the scenes are such as could be easily arranged in drawing-rooms or upon a very simple and improvised stage.

Because a program for amateurs is not, as a usual thing, expected to fill the entire evening, these farces consist of one act, which on an average would require about one-half hour to perform.

The reader is also reminded of the fact that the desire of the amateur "for something easy to act," for a play in which the actors have almost an equal amount of the work to do, and for a certain simplicity of situation, limit even a very modest "playwright" in the choice of matter and character.

A DOMESTIC DILEMMA is written primarily for a golf club entertainment, or any audience of golf players, and is also arranged for opportunity to give as much or as little vaudeville (dancing or singing) as is desired, in the scene where CHRISTINE and the VALET entertain the unwelcome

D r a w i n g - R o o m P l a y s

MR. MORTON. To this role of the VALET only a hint of English accent has been ascribed, leaving that part of the characterization to the actor, who may possibly prefer, anyway, to present him as a New Yorker.

As a usual thing, the fault of the amateur is to hurry lines and situations, in a nervous manner, lacking sufficient repose to give them their whole value, however slight that value may be. And in this first farce especially, deliberation is urged, the lines being short and the changes frequent enough to insure liveliness without any necessity of haste. In fact by hurrying it too much any effect which it might give would be lost. The costumes are modern and the brighter the better. The roles of CHRISTINE and NORA MCGINTY could be acted by the same person, in case one wished more of a chance for acting than one part alone affords. And in that case, NORA's costume should be particularly flamboyant and absurd; a big hat covered with flowers, drawn low over the forehead, affording something of a disguise. Her appearance should be such as to raise a laugh at her entrance, before she speaks at all. A real or part of a real telephone is an important adjunct.

The reader is reminded that a good reading play is often a very different thing from one which acts well. The author claims for these only that they have action and amusing situations, and will be effective on the amateur stage.

A Domestic Dilemma

CHARACTERS

MRS. JACK WYNN — *A young married woman of no housekeeping genius, known to her friends as Daisy.*

CHRISTINE BRUCE — *Her friend. A young society girl devoted to athletics.*

NORA MCGINTY — *A servant.*

HONORABLE HERBERT ASHMEAD — *A young Englishman of good family, who is expected at the Wynn home as a guest for overnight.*

HIS VALET.

DICK MORTON — *A young student, grave for his years.*

The scene consists of the front room in Mrs. Wynn's cozy suburban residence. There is a door in the back wall, C., which opens in the front hall, and to the left of this, a window. Another door in the right wall, at one side, is supposed to open into the dining-room, beyond which is the kitchen. In the room are a piano, a sofa, table, chairs, bric-a-brac, and other ordinary furnishings. A mirror hangs to the R. of the door back. The curtain rising discovers the place in dire and dreary disorder, not even a chair in its proper place. Mrs. Wynn, her hair bound in a bandana, forming a queer contrast to her pretty dress, is distractedly trying to get order out of chaos. At times she stops to look at herself in mirror and rearrange her hair.

MRS. WYNN. Dear ! Dear ! [*to herself*] Dear ! This is simply awful. Only one servant left in the house, and a guest expected by the next train. There ! [*Throws several articles and books under the sofa.*] I wish Jack would come home — unexpectedly. One's husband is so useful at times. I could put him to sweeping off the front steps. If I only had time [*opens piano and dusts it noisily*], I know I should make a good housekeeper.

VOICE. [*Outside.*] Mrs. Wynn, where be ye ?
Oh, Mrs. Wynn —

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MRS. WYNN. Here I am ! The cook calling to me in my own house ! I am shocked to have answered her.

[Enter at door back, NORA, wearing a ridiculous and gaudy street costume, and carrying boxes and bundles innumerable.]

Why, Nora, what do you want ?

NORA. Why don't ye ask me to be seated, Mum, like a lady should ? *a maid*

MRS. WYNN. Seated ! Why should my cook sit in my presence ?

NORA. Because I ain't ye're cook no longer, Mum, I ain't nobody's cook.

MRS. WYNN. What ! Why, Nora, you were a cook not ten minutes ago, out in my kitchen. I saw you there peeling potatoes — I saw you there with my own eyes.

NORA. What if I was ? What if I was ? Ye needn't throw it up at me —

MRS. WYNN. Nora, tell me the truth, are you going to leave me ?

NORA. I am takin' leave, Mum.

MRS. WYNN. Why, oh, why ?

NORA. I don't know, Mum — but the President of our Union — she's a lady — has called us all out — we're all on a strike, so I'm a-goin'.

MRS. WYNN. But, Nora — a guest is coming — I can't cook — oh, what shall I do ? [Weeps.] *want*

NORA. Sorry, Mum. [Weeps in sympathy.] The only advice I can give ye is to form a union.

MRS. WYNN. A union of what ?

NORA. I don't know, Mum. Just a union. It's the best way. Good day, Mum, — I'm going, — the potatoes is all peeled, Mum, — and the little duck — the little duck is just ready to put in the oven — [through tears] it is on — it is in — the pantry shelf.

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MRS. WYNN. Oh! Oh! I never in the world can get a dinner. I haven't time. O Nora! Stay, stay!

NORA. [*Solemnly.*] Mum, I would,—but I belong to the union. Good-by, Mum, it is my juty which calls me. [*She gathers up all the boxes and de-parts, leaving Mrs. WYNN weeping.*]

MRS. WYNN. What shall I do? How I wish I had been raised a cook! But I never had time to learn how to cook; I was too busy dancing—what's that? O heavens! Some one is ringing the door bell—and I can't go in this apron—the door is opening—he must have pried open the lock—I hear him coming this way—Mr. Ashmead wasn't expected until four! Who can it be? It is probably that burglar who has been murdering women in broad daylight, for their jewels—[*louder*] Wait! Don't come in! I mean, where shall I hide? Oh, dear, I can't let a burglar find me in this apron! I should have put on a clean one, but I didn't have time! [*Gets behind piano with back toward door.*]

[*Enter CHRISTINE in traveling dress, carrying golf clubs.*]

MRS. WYNN. [*Solemnly from behind piano.*] You may take anything in the house if only you won't find me.

CHRISTINE. What? Whose voice is that? Is this a haunted house?

MRS. WYNN. A woman burglar!

CHRISTINE. The ghost, I suppose!

MRS. WYNN. Well, I don't mind a *woman* burglar seeing this old apron. [*Comes out.*]

[*Both women scream "CHRISTINE," "DAISY," and rush into each other's arms. Mrs. WYNN leads CHRISTINE to sofa.*]

MRS. WYNN. What are you doing in this part of the country, Christine?

CHRISTINE. Breaking golf records. I have come

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here to stay a month with you. I like your golf course. I may stay longer. [*Business with golf clubs.*]

MRS. WYNN. [*Dubiously.*] Oh, how nice!

CHRISTINE. [*Taking off hat and jacket.*] All I want is a good bit of juicy beefsteak for dinner, bread and butter and five or six eggs.

MRS. WYNN. Don't you like duck? [*Watching other put an imaginary ball.*]

CHRISTINE. I *loathe* duck. I never eat it. Do ring for the servant, Daisy dear, my trunk is in the hall. This putter needs polishing.

MRS. WYNN. Your trunk is in the hall! Couldn't you carry it up yourself?

CHRISTINE. I suppose I could. My muscles are in splendid condition and the trunk is mostly filled with golf balls, but — *but* —

MRS. WYNN. I should think you would *enjoy* carrying it up, just to show how strong you are.

CHRISTINE. Oh, yes, but who's to see me do it? How odd it would look, anyway, to the servants —

MRS. WYNN. Oh, I have no servants!

CHRISTINE. You poor thing! Why, I heard you married *well*.

MRS. WYNN. Oh, I did! But they have gone.

CHRISTINE. Your husband? [*Polishes putter with chamois skin from pocket.*]

MRS. WYNN. No, *all* the servants have left and my husband is in the city and a friend of his is coming to stay here tonight —

CHRISTINE. Tonight? How jolly! I don't mind there being no servants. *He* can carry up my trunk.

MRS. WYNN. No! No! He won't. *He*, this friend of my husband's, is a swell Englishman with a valet and all that sort of thing. Imagine an Englishman com-

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ing into a servantless home! He can only stay one night, though, as he has passage engaged for the next day.

CHRISTINE. [*In brown study.*] You are sure he has a valet with him?

MRS. WYNN. Oh, very sure!

CHRISTINE. Then *he* can carry up my trunk!

MRS. WYNN. Oh dear, oh dear! Can't you see how awfully mortifying it is for us — what will this Mr. Ashmead think of us! And we are so far from the city. I have telephoned to Jack, but he can't bring a maid. He won't, and says he is too busy and he will arrive here just in time for dinner, and there won't be any dinner.

CHRISTINE. No dinner! And I've gone around a two-mile course since luncheon——

[*Door bell rings.*]

[*Both.*] Oh! [*Both rise.*]

MRS. WYNN. Now who can that be?

CHRISTINE. Perhaps your husband has succeeded in finding a cook.

MRS. WYNN. I will look and see. [*Goes to the window.*] No, it is the Englishman's valet bringing his boxes. What shall I do? I can't open the door for a valet. English valets are so fiercely proper.

[*Bell rings again.*]

CHRISTINE. Of course not; you can't open the door for him. I will go.

MRS. WYNN. Oh, that wouldn't do! He would take you for the servant. [*Both standing, looking into each other's eyes, then laugh.*]

CHRISTINE. I'll do it. I'll be the servant. Quick! Quick! Give me a cap! [*Places golf clubs and bag in corner.*]

[*MRS. WYNN fits her out in apron and cap, which have been lying in chair.*]

MRS. WYNN. What a nice little maid you make!

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Now, I'll run. You let him in — tell him to go into the kitchen. I'll get the dinner. I'll be in the pantry.

[*Exeunt* MRS. WYNN and CHRISTINE *at different doors.*]

[*Re-enter* CHRISTINE and VALET, *who is very English.*]

CHRISTINE. Mrs. Wynn said you were to go immediately into the kitchen.

VALET. Very well; which way do I go?

CHRISTINE. That door! Wait! First I want you to carry Mr. — what's your master's name?

VALET. My master's name? Ah! Why, Ashmead, of course.

CHRISTINE. You must carry Mr. Ashmead's boxes upstairs, and my trunk —

VALET. *Your* trunk! I must carry your trunk upstairs? [*Intense surprise.*]

CHRISTINE. Yes, my trunk! I've heard before of the impertinence of English servants to Americans! Do you refuse to carry up my trunk?

VALET. Where are the other servants? [*Looking about.*] Call them, don't you know!

CHRISTINE. Other servants! Oh, no, indeed there are none. I am the only servant in the house. [*As he looks at her, man slowly smiles. He walks down stage and back again.*]

VALET. Very well; I am glad *you* are here. Where is the trunk?

[CHRISTINE *darts into hall and drags in trunk.*]

CHRISTINE. Here it is.

VALET. [*Lifts it.*] Jove! What a light trunk! It must be empty.

CHRISTINE. No, indeed; it is half full of golf balls.

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VALET. [*Setting down trunk and sitting on it.*] Golf balls ! I don't move from this place until I learn what use you can possibly make of golf balls. You are Mrs. Wynn's maid ?

CHRISTINE. Yes. What business is that of yours ? [*Standing before him.*]

VALET. Well, you are a very pretty one, at any rate, and I think we will have good times together. Sit down. Pray sit down. [*He motions her to the other end of the trunk.*]

CHRISTINE. What ! Where ? There ? What do you mean, Sir ?

VALET. I've 'eard of the howdashous cheek of h'American servants, and of course you're stuck up, my dear, but I don't mind. May I smoke ?

CHRISTINE. No ! [*He stops after getting out pipe and striking match.*]

VALET. Then I won't—until later. In England——

CHRISTINE. Do you *refuse* to go into the kitchen ?

VALET. Yes, I refuse ; but you have told me to go, so you have done your duty. I suppose you scorn me because I'm a servant now. But mind, I am not a servant always. In the summer, I'm a ——

CHRISTINE. What ?

VALET. A professional golf instructor. [*Glancing at clubs in corner.*]

CHRISTINE. A golf instructor ! Oh, how perfectly delightful ! I thought you were much too good looking to ——

VALET. To — what — don't mind me ! I am *used* to admiration. To be ——

CHRISTINE. To be an Englishman's valet *all* the year.

VALET. No ; I wouldn't do that for anything.

CHRISTINE. I'm *so* glad to hear you say it. Oh, won't you come out and play golf with me tomorrow morning ?

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VALET. I really can't say.

CHRISTINE. Oh, please say you will! There are my clubs!

VALET. How do I know what sort of a game you put up? I never before knew a lady's maid who played golf.

CHRISTINE. Oh, never mind that. Say you will. Say you will play golf with me! I know you could teach me such a lot.

VALET. No doubt. But you might not treat me well.

CHRISTINE. I will treat you *very* well—I worship golf.

VALET. Americans are so undemocratic. You might remember all the time we were on the links that I am a valet—in the winter.

CHRISTINE. I should never think of it—I promise you. Really I play very well. My score is 48—

VALET. Dreadful! [*Laughs scornfully.*] A dreadful score!

CHRISTINE. Do you think so? Some one here said that I put up a game almost like a man's.

VALET. Heaven forbid!

CHRISTINE. What! You must have a high ideal of golf.

VALET. Of women, possibly.

CHRISTINE. I'm sure I could never snub *you*.

VALET. But you won't allow me to smoke—

CHRISTINE. You may now—

VALET. Thanks. [*He smokes.*] Won't you sit down?

CHRISTINE. Where?

VALET. Why—er—here! [*Motions to other half of trunk.*]

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[CHRISTINE *seats herself, after hesitating, coyly beside him.*]

CHRISTINE. Now will you play golf with me? [*At farthest end of trunk.*]

VALET. I certainly will if Mr. Ashmead permits it. Aren't you afraid of falling off, don't you know?

CHRISTINE. And if Mrs. Wynn is willing. [*Proudly.*] No; I am *not* going to fall off.

VALET. She must be a great swell if even her maid belongs to the golf club. What do the other servants belong to?

CHRISTINE. Oh, she is "swell"! Her servants are always leaving. They belong to unions, I suppose.

VALET. You won't leave—er—at least—not while I am here, will you? [*Moving closer to her.*]

CHRISTINE. No; I won't. I may lower my golf score, if I stay. [*Both kick their heels carelessly against the trunk. Silence but for this noise.*]

VALET. Do you know, I think we are getting along famously.

CHRISTINE. I suppose your record is well known?

VALET. In golf, perhaps. Some things I keep quite secret; but I mean we are getting along famously together—

CHRISTINE. [*Jumping up.*] Oh!

VALET. [*Also jumping up.*] Why, together we could smash all the records in the world.

CHRISTINE. What a beautiful dream! [*Looking up into his eyes.*]

[*A ring at the door bell is heard.*]
There! Some one is at that dreadful door again. [*Turns away.*]

VALET. I will open the door for you. It is the greatest pleasure to open doors for you! [*Follows her.*]

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CHRISTINE. Oh, no, it might be Mr. Ashmead who rang!

VALET. I think not. Do let me go for you. I want to do *all* the work for you while I stay, if I may.

CHRISTINE. Oh, that will be very nice! You may open the door.

[Exit VALET. *He goes out slowly puffing at pipe.*]

CHRISTINE. [*Sits on trunk, sighs.*] He is a dream — delightful — handsome — cute — old thing! I shall be a servant always. I suppose my cap is becoming. He acts like it. [*She goes to mirror.*]

[Enter VALET.]

VALET. Ahem! [*She hurries from the mirror.*] Where is Mrs. Wynn?

CHRISTINE. Sh-h-h! In the kitchen or the pantry. Give *me* the card. [*Reads.*] Mr. Richard Morton — oh dear! — Mr. Richard Morton — I told him to stay miles away.

VALET. Who is this Mr. Richard Morton? [*Puts away pipe.*]

CHRISTINE. Sh-h-h-h! He is the man I am engaged to.

VALET. [*Sits down.*] Then I won't let him in.

CHRISTINE. For a valet I must say you are extremely overbearing. [*Standing.*]

VALET. But remember I am also a golf instructor. [*Takes up her cleik.*]

CHRISTINE. Don't I know it? Oh, why did that man come? He has no soul for golf. He will never let me play golf with you. Never! Never! [*Pacing stage.*]

VALET. Then I won't let him in. [*Feeling cleik suggestively.*]

CHRISTINE. But it is cold out there on the veranda.

VALET. Perhaps. [*Shrugs shoulders.*]

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CHRISTINE. Do you really want so much to play golf with me? [*Approaching him.*]

VALET. Oh, very much! [*Pause.*] Do you really care for the man?

CHRISTINE. I—I don't know. [*Drooping head.*]

VALET. You are in doubt.

CHRISTINE. I have told him lots of times that I would never marry him. Why—even his caddies laugh at him on the links.

VALET. That settles him. You can never marry such a man.

CHRISTINE. Why?

VALET. How can an athletic marvel, such as you are, one with a career before her——

CHRISTINE. Oh——

VALET. For I can coach you right into the record-breaking class. How can such an athlete as you marry a man who can't even put?

CHRISTINE. How do you know he can't put?

VALET. I knew it as soon as I saw him. He hasn't the eye. You do not love him. Break the engagement.

CHRISTINE. I have, lots of times.

VALET. Then he thinks that, like all American girls, you do not mean what you say. Break it again.

CHRISTINE. Where?

VALET. Here, now. I shall not undertake to coach you until you have broken your engagement with that shivering hound out there on the veranda. [*Points toward window.*]

CHRISTINE. Oh, is he shivering? Bring him in.

VALET. I will not bring him in.

CHRISTINE. Then how can I break our engagement?

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VALET. Write it to him—I will take it out.

CHRISTINE. Oh, what a dreadful thing to do! What a way to do it!

VALET. I see you are not in earnest. You must cultivate the proper sporting spirit. It is half the battle, in golf.

CHRISTINE. Yes, I know it is. I—well—where is the paper? [*He goes to table.*]

VALET. Here it is, my future golf champion, and here is a pencil.

CHRISTINE. [*Seats herself at table. Biting end of pencil.*] He must be awfully cold out there. Will you let him in after I have written the message?

VALET. Yes, in all probability. [*Watching her.*]

✓ CHRISTINE. [*Writing.*] It gets easier to break our engagement every time I do it.

VALET. What is that chap's business? Some grocer's clerk, I suppose?

CHRISTINE. Oh, no, he is a young theological student!

VALET. Break it off—break it off—quickly—absolutely unsuitable. You American maids are shockingly ambitious, don't you know. I suppose it is the influence on you of your golf clubs. [*She drops pencil and he gets on knee to give it to her.*] Now a golf instructor, who is a valet in winter, seems much more suitable for you. You need no longer stay in domestic service, unless you wish. [*Still kneeling.*]

CHRISTINE. [*Rising.*] Sh-h-h-h! Mrs. Wynn might come in. You may see what I have written [*they read together, seated on trunk*], if you'll never tell. It would be mean to tell.

VALET. I should say. [*Looking over her shoulder.*]

CHRISTINE. “Dear Dick: I really must break off our engagement, once more. I wish to go in for a course

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of golf with a professional coach, who will devote his entire time to me——”

VALET. Good!

CHRISTINE. “It is the chance of my life, so I cannot marry you. After you receive this, you may come in.
CHRIS.”

VALET. [*Folding it up.*] Good! Now, where’s the ring?

CHRISTINE. Oh, I never give back the ring, when I break the engagement!

VALET. Shocking! Well, you must this time, don’t you know. [*She takes it off regretfully and gives it to him.*]

CHRISTINE. I rather liked—the ring.

VALET. Now don’t worry, little girl, I shall not allow you to regret this. [*Rising.*]

CHRISTINE. Oh, I never worry! I always enjoy throwing him over. [*Clicks heels against trunk and hums song.*]

VALET. Where is the silver salver?

CHRISTINE. The what?

VALET. The thing that his card ought to have been brought in on, don’t you know?

CHRISTINE. Oh, you *are* a smart servant! I wonder where it can be! I saw it somewhere in this room. [*They look about and at last find it under the sofa where Mrs. WYNN has put it while “cleaning up.”*] Here it is.

VALET. Thanks. [*VALET places note, ring and card on tray.*] I take pleasure in carrying him your rejection. [*He bows. Exit VALET.*]

CHRISTINE. [*Left alone.*] Poor Dick! He ought to get used to this sort of thing, but he never does, somehow. He is so good. I wish I were good. I wonder

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what he will say! [*Goes to window and looks out.*]
Dear me! He does look awfully cold and lonesome.
Well, it serves him right. He ought to be more active
— like Mr. Ashmead's golf instructor. There he comes
now. He hands the note to Dick. Dick is surprised.
He reads it. He—— Oh dear! I'm frightened——
[*Runs away from window.*] What have I done?

VOICE OF MRS. WYNN. [*Outside.*] Christine, how
long do ducks boil?

CHRISTINE. [*Calling out door to kitchen.*] I'll be
there in a moment. Don't leave them. You must
watch them every minute, for ever so long.

MRS. WYNN. [*Forlornly.*] All right, I will.

[CHRISTINE goes to piano, where she sits and
plays or sings.] *Enter Ashmead*

CHRISTINE. Well, I must "carry it off." Tra-la-
la-la! [*Stops with a bang when enter VALET with a
rush, dragging MORTON by coat collar.*]

CHRISTINE. Oh, good afternoon, Mr. Morton!

VALET. Do you mean to say, Miss — that this man
is a theological student?

CHRISTINE. Yes, he is, — was, — isn't he?

MORTON. You bully, stop spoiling my collar!

VALET. I don't believe it. He used language to me
just now that no gentleman would use to another.
Ash. — What is the trouble? Who is it? I suffer?

MORTON. Gentleman! Are you a gentleman?
Unhand me then — villain! [VALET lets him go, and
MORTON rearranges collar at mirror.]

CHRISTINE. [*To VALET.*] You should have broken
the news to him gently. I always tell him by degrees.

VALET. I did. I said, "Leave the place. The
maid is not at home, don't you know."

MORTON. He insulted me. Spoke as if I had come
to call upon the servant. Did you write this note,
Christine?

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CHRISTINE. Yes; why?

MORTON. It is spelled correctly, so I thought it was possibly from some one else,—what's that thing on your head?

CHRISTINE. O Dick, how cruel of you! It is a cap.

VALET. Cruel to you, is he? The brute! Here, young fellow, get out of this——

CHRISTINE. Stop! Stop! Oh, don't have a fight!
[*Running in between them.*]

MORTON. I am not going to fight; I never fight.

VALET. Good! I do.

MORTON. Christine, I demand an explanation. On such a solemn occasion as this I demand an explanation or a retraction.

CHRISTINE. This isn't a solemn occasion. What is a retraction?

MORTON. Your ignorance appalls me! Who is that man?

CHRISTINE. Oh, don't ask me! [*To VALET, pulling him aside.*] Don't tell him. No one must know who you are. It is a secret.

VALET. I should say so. I wouldn't have it known for worlds.

CHRISTINE. [*To MORTON.*] This man is—is—we are going to play golf together. [*CHRISTINE and VALET are L., MORTON R.*]

MORTON. Your frivolity does not anger me more than it arouses my just indignation. I deserve an explanation. In fact I insist upon one. Christine, you loved me once. [*Folds arms.*]

CHRISTINE. Well, don't throw it up at me. I couldn't help it then, Dick, really.

MORTON. Well, I could forgive you for that, if you would only love me now.

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CHRISTINE. Oh, I couldn't think of it now! I haven't time. You know what I said in the note.

MORTON. But listen to me —

VALET. My dear girl, I am now ready to carry your trunk upstairs.

CHRISTINE. Well I am glad to hear that. I am relieved to know that you at last consent to obey. You seem now to know your place.

VALET. You have taught it to me. I will take care of the trunk because it is yours.

CHRISTINE. Oh, how nicely you do put things!

MORTON. [*Coming between them.*] You shall not.
[*Both men stand by trunk.*]

VALET. I will.

MORTON. I will carry her trunk myself.

CHRISTINE. You couldn't do it.

MORTON. [*To VALET.*] Out of the way, fellow.
[*Takes off his coat.*] I am now ready to carry the trunk.

[*While MORTON stands impotently by, VALET takes trunk on shoulder and walks out with it.*]

CHRISTINE. Won't you please go home, Dickie dear?

MORTON. No, not until I have had the inexpressible sorrow of an explanation from you.

CHRISTINE. Oh, please go, Dickie, or put on your coat!

DICK. I decline. I have become desperate enough for anything. I shall keep off my coat.

CHRISTINE. Well, there's good reading matter on the table, or under the sofa. I know you will enjoy reading. You may read the note through again, too. [*Laughs.*]

[*Exit CHRISTINE.*]

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MORTON. Wretched frivolity. She has broken my heart. Under the sofa—reading matter under the sofa! How inexpressibly frivolous! [*Looks under sofa and brings out book.*] A novel! I am for the moment consoled—only for the moment. [*Sits and reads.*]

[*Enter MRS. WYNN.*]

MRS. WYNN. [*Aside.*] Oh, so Mr. Ashmead has come! What an extremely sedate man he seems to be—reading “The Sorrows of Satan,” and making himself so much at home with his coat off. [*To MORTON.*] I am Mrs. Wynn.

MORTON. Ah, Mrs. Wynn, how you startled me! How do you do? I hope I find you well. [*Rises and bows with ceremony.*]

MRS. WYNN. Quite, thank you. And the ducks are getting along beautifully.

MORTON. The ducks! How different from Marie Corelli! [*Both sit.*]

MRS. WYNN. How serious he is! Welcome to our little home! Although at present we have only one servant, she is a hard worker, and everything shall be done for your comfort. I hope you will stay at least a week with us.

MORTON. Ah, Mrs. Wynn! How inexpressibly kind of you! Then I shall be able to finish this book, while I watch *her*. That is certainly a most tempting invitation. Although I have other duties—far from here—alas!—I think for once I will indulge the strain of frivolity in my nature—and—stay. I accept the invitation with avidity.

MRS. WYNN. [*Jumping up in consternation.*] You do! Oh dear!—I mean, how nice! I thought you were starting abroad tomorrow.

MORTON. I? Oh, no! Not at all. I shall be delighted to stay.

MRS. WYNN. Oh! Oh! The last straw! Oh! Oh!

Drawing - Room Plays

Ash.
MORTON. My dear Madam, what is the matter with you? Nothing serious, I hope.

MRS. WYNN. Yes; very serious. But I am delighted to see you making yourself so much at home. [*Sits again.*]

Ash.
MORTON. I thank you, dear Madam. You have made me feel at home. A long visit would delight me here. You seem indisposed. Can I do anything for you? Shall I ring for your maid?

MRS. WYNN. Oh, no! Oh, no! Pray continue to talk. You speak with such elegance.

too at home
MORTON. I feel that I am in the presence of an appreciative woman. Unfortunately all women are not appreciative. Unfortunately so many unmarried females are so overcome by their own frivolity that they cannot understand the higher nature of man. In fact, they tread upon this higher nature and turn it into bitterness. I have known of such cases.

MRS. WYNN. Indeed!

MORTON. Furthermore, a woman has it within her power to make of a man a cynic or an angel — she has this awful responsibility in her power, I say.

MRS. WYNN. Aren't you cold without your coat on?

MORTON. My coat! Dear me! [*In embarrassment.*] I am — I beg a thousand pardons. I am so absent-minded. The absent-mindedness of one who has his mind on higher things — yes thanks, that is it — yes, I will put it on — [*does so*]. The higher nature of man demands — [*Has difficulty with one sleeve.*]

MRS. WYNN. Oh, excuse me just one minute! I am so interested, but I must telephone to my husband on a matter of great importance. [*Goes to telephone near front of stage, while MORTON takes book near rear. Business with phone may be made longer.*] Hello! Hello! [*etc.*] Nickel! Oh, yes! [*At last gets her husband on phone.*] Jack, is this you? Well, this is me — yes, M-E-E. Well, anyway, I wish you would give up that tiresome business and come home. Mr. Ashmead is

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here. He bores me to death. We have no servant, you know, and he says he is going to stay a week. Please come home. It is our living you say, our daily bread? No matter! Come home! Good-by! Good-by! Oh, what is that burning in the kitchen? Excuse me, something's burning! Oh dear! It's the dinner burning up! The ducks! The ducks!

[*Exit MRS. WYNN in great flurry.*]

[*MORTON still continues to read, now lying on sofa.*]

[*Enter CHRISTINE and VALET.*]

CHRISTINE. Oh, he is still here!

VALET. How extremely impertinent of him!

MORTON. Yes; I am here, Miss Bruce, and here I intend to remain. Mrs. Wynn has invited me to spend the week with her as a guest.

CHRISTINE. You had better not stay—I am going to be so frivolous. You won't *want* to stay.

VALET. Do be frivolous. It will be rather entertaining, I think. So few people are really frivolous, don't you know.

CHRISTINE. [*To VALET.*] You must go into the kitchen now.

VALET. I refuse to go into the kitchen. I will stay and help you entertain Mr. Morton, if you are going to do it here. Do you sing?

[*They proceed to sing together and do other vaudeville turns—at the discretion of the actors.*]

MR. MORTON *is very visibly shocked.*]

MORTON. This is outrageous. I prefer Marie Corelli.

[*Enter MRS. WYNN. VALET and CHRISTINE at piano.*]

MRS. WYNN. Christine, what *does* this mean? What a valet!

Drawing-Room Plays

VALET. Am I not a proper one, Madam?

CHRISTINE. Oh, Mrs. Wynn, we are just entertaining your guest here!

MORTON. I am not entertained in the slightest.
[*Rises.*]

CHRISTINE. [*To VALET.*] That is Mrs. Wynn, my mistress. [*To MORTON.*] I am her maid, you know. I have hired out as her servant.

MORTON. Her servant! You are in this house as a servant! How frivolous! Now I understand all. That thing on your head is the badge of servitude.

CHRISTINE. And Mrs. Wynn, Mum [*courtesying*], this is Mr. Ashmead's valet, only he is not a valet all the year. He is a golf instructor, and I have wrung a promise from him to coach me in golf.

VALET. We are about to enter the record-breaking class together.

MORTON. Now I understand all. Two golf fiends who play as one. I understand all! [*Hands to head dramatically.*]

MRS. WYNN, VALET, CHRISTINE. And you think you must go?

MORTON. No, I shall stay out my visit. I never break a promise.

MRS. WYNN. Oh dear! Christine, as long as you are my maid, you must stop this playing on the piano and flirting with the valet——

CHRISTINE. Flirting?

VALET. I hope not.

MRS. WYNN. And don't you know, sweep this room, and meanwhile my *guest* [*to MORTON*] may come into the kitchen with me. It is the only place where I have time to entertain him. [*To VALET.*] And you, as for you, you may go upstairs and make the beds.

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VALET. Make the beds! By Jove! How odd! I don't know how to make beds, don't you know. [*Drops into chair in despair.*]

MRS. WYNN. [*To* MORTON.] Come along with me into the kitchen. If you *must* be entertained, it is the only place where *I* can entertain you.

MORTON. I have already been sufficiently entertained—in fact, almost overentertained, I should say; I prefer to stay here,—and read. [*Makes himself comfortable on sofa again.*]

MRS. WYNN, VALET, CHRISTINE. Indeed!

MORTON. Exactly.

MRS. WYNN. Very well, but *I* must go back into that *beastly* kitchen. Now, Nora, you and the Valet must wait on my guest while I am gone. Get him whatever he wants.

CHRISTINE. Oh!

[*Exit* MRS. WYNN.]

VALET. A remarkable idea, that, asking me to make beds! [*To* CHRISTINE.] Why don't you make them, don't you know?

CHRISTINE. I?

MORTON. I wish, my dear, that you would bring me a cigar. It is in the pocket of my overcoat, in the hall.

CHRISTINE. Get you a ——— Well, I never!

VALET. What do you expect, my dear? Don't you intend to earn your wages?

CHRISTINE. [*Haughtily.*] I suppose so!

[*Exit* CHRISTINE.]

MORTON. My good man, would you — ah — be so kind as to proceed to your bed-making? Make my bed, too. I like the pillows well shaken up, and the sheets particularly smooth. Proceed to your bed-making.

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VALET. [*Who has risen in a rage.*] Say that again and I'll wring your beastly neck, don't you know.

MORTON. Well, what can you expect? Don't you intend to earn your wages? [*Sarcastically mocking him.*]

VALET. That's none of your business. [*Taking off coat and rolling up sleeves.*] Come on and have a tussle with me — I should enjoy it, don't you know.

MORTON. [*Languidly.*] Thanks, I never fight. [*He does not rise.*]

[*Enter CHRISTINE.*]

CHRISTINE. There is your cigar, Sir, and if you are a brute you will smoke it. [*He does so.*]

CHRISTINE. [*Approaching VALET.*] Oh! Were you showing him your golf muscles? See mine. [*Rolls up her sleeves with enthusiasm.*]

VALET. [*Pulling down sleeves.*] I acknowledge, you win. I could never hope to equal those. [*Resumes coat.*]

MORTON. You may now throw that ah — er — slumber robe over my feet.

CHRISTINE. To whom are you speaking?

MORTON. Oh, I'm not particular; either of you will do!

CHRISTINE. Such insolence!

VALET. Oh, you American servants! [*To her.*]

MORTON. It strikes me the English servants are very little better. Perhaps you will kindly obey me, my good man. Cover up my feet.

VALET. [*To CHRISTINE.*] You do it!

CHRISTINE. [*To VALET.*] No; you do it!

VALET. I refuse.

CHRISTINE. You refuse to obey me? [*Stamping her foot.*]

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VALET. Oh, certainly! [*Both men smoke in silence.*]

CHRISTINE. [*To VALET. Almost in tears.*] I—
I—~~hate~~ you! ~~here~~ *Christine*

MORTON. Good!

CHRISTINE. [*Fiercely.*] You keep quiet.

VALET. [*Approaching CHRISTINE.*] Well, I am very far, don't you know, little girl, from hating you. [*Throwing pipe out of window.*]

CHRISTINE. Are you?

VALET. In fact—[*clears throat*] in fact—I—
er—I—

MORTON. [*Rising disgustedly.*] Oh, if you are going to propose to her I will get out. I've done all I could. A proposal more or less won't disturb *her* any. She is used to them. And by the way [*reaches in pocket and brings out ring*], she is rather attached to this ring, and it is a perfect fit. [*Lays it on the piano.*] Why not use it? I will now leave you, the *servants*, in the parlor, while I entertain your mistress, Mrs. Wynn, in the *kitchen*, with Marie Corelli.

[*Exit MORTON with book under arm.*]

CHRISTINE. Isn't he horrid! So ungrateful! After my being engaged to him about three years. [*VALET takes her hand. She allows him for a moment to hold it.*] Now, leave me, sir! Your impudence surprises me!

VALET. [*Starting away from her.*] Impudence! You amaze me. I will go, and if I do, I shall never come here again. I cannot understand you Americans, don't you know—but I do not wish to understand you, for, after all, you are charming as you are. However, this last rudeness is too much. I am going to leave this house at once, Mrs. Wynn must have been crazy to expect me to make beds.

CHRISTINE, Oh, don't go!

VALET. [*Now taking both her hands.*] Come with me. ~~I love you, I love you.~~

Drawing-Room Plays

[Telephone bell rings and continues to ring. At last VALET gives up what he is trying to say and answers phone. Listens.]

CHRISTINE. What is it?

VALET. [At phone.] Yes, yes, yes.

J CHRISTINE. [Repeats.] Oh, what is it?

VALET. [At length in a rage.] A man who says, that he knows Mr. Ashmead is a bore, but that Mrs. Wynn must be nice to him, because he wants to sell him that team of horses that ran away last week, and the man says also, that he will be here in half an hour. He will be here with three servants. Who is he?

CHRISTINE. Why, that is Jack, of course, Mrs. Wynn's husband.

VALET. Very well, then, I am going. [Aside.] So I am a bore, am I?

CHRISTINE. Please don't. Please don't go.

VALET. I must. This is too much. [Aside.] The absurdity of Jack Wynn thinking *me* a bore. I have always considered him one, don't you know. [He rages about expressing anger.]

CHRISTINE. [Weeping.] Don't go. I can't bear to have you go. Don't feel so badly! Don't go!

VALET. [Coming over to her quickly.] Do you really care?

CHRISTINE. I never met a man I liked so much. I don't *want* you to go.

VALET. Listen to me, little girl. I am not a golf instructor. [Lifting up her chin.]

CHRISTINE. [Weeps more.] Not a golf instructor! Then you are only a valet. Oh! Oh!

VALET. Do you like me now? Don't you like me anyway?

CHRISTINE. Oh, I feel just the same toward you! Somehow I ought not to, but I do. And you are only

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a valet. What an awful misfortune! What an awful thing to have happened to me!

VALET. A valet is quite proper for a maid, I think.

CHRISTINE. But I am not that sort of a maid. [*Drying eyes suddenly.*] Now, really, you must leave me. We have had a lovely, jolly time together. I'll remember you all my life, but because of your—position, I must never see you again.

VALET. You will marry Morton, I suppose. [*Gloomily.*]

CHRISTINE. I shall never marry.

VALET. I am sure you will. You are going to marry me. [*With an air of sudden determination.*]

CHRISTINE. Don't. You must go. How can you dare to presume so!

VALET. I don't know. I don't know — anything.

CHRISTINE. Go, I say. You are only a valet.

VALET. [*Turning away.*] How far less democratic a woman always is than a man! A man loves a woman, and he cares not whether she be a saint or sinner, maid or heiress, he will marry her;—but a woman—even a servant—must always hope to better her social position. I am sorry that you share the weakness of your sex—I must go. It is indeed time for me to go.

[*Goes toward door with extreme slowness.*]

CHRISTINE. Stop! Before you go—wait—just one minute—oh, don't go—come back——

VALET. [*Returns quickly.*] My dear girl, what is it? I do love you. [*Telephone bell rings again once, but he does not answer it.*] Confound that telephone. I do love you.

CHRISTINE. Then, if you do, ~~before you leave me forever, you may kiss me—just once.~~

[*They kiss just as MRS. WYNN and MORTON appear. CHRISTINE'S cap is on one side of her head. The two jump apart quickly.*]

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MORTON. What frivolity! Oh, that cap! [*Stands L.*]

MRS. WYNN. Christine, you horrify me. I didn't include kissing the valet among your duties, or I should — [*Stands C.*]

CHRISTINE. [*Laughing through tears*]—have paid me extra. [*Stands R.*]

VALET. [*Coming C.*] Mrs. Wynn, I am not a valet. This nonsense must cease. I have fallen in love with your maid, but I am Herbert Ashmead. Here is my card. [*Presents it.*]

CHRISTINE. [*Running to Mrs. WYNN.*] Oh, don't tell him! Don't tell him who I am.

MRS. WYNN. I will. She is not my maid, Mr. Ashmead; she is my friend, Miss Christine Bruce.

[CHRISTINE and ASHMEAD bow with exaggerated formality to each other.]

CHRISTINE AND ASHMEAD. Glad to meet you.

MRS. WYNN [*to MORTON*]. And who are you?

MORTON. Oh, nobody in particular! Just a poor wretch to whom Miss Bruce was once engaged.

[*Door bell rings.*]

MRS. WYNN. There's Jack. [*Goes to window.*] And without a servant! Let us fix the room before he comes in. Get to work now everybody.

CHRISTINE. Now perhaps, Mr. Ashmead, we can begin to get acquainted. [*Passing him a duster.*]

[*All set busily to work improving room with dusters, brooms and great energy. MORTON uses carpet-sweeper.*]

[*Curtain.*]



II.

PREFATORY NOTE

The greatest necessity of this play's presentation will be that the stage-settings, costumes, music, the poses of the figures at different times, and, above all, the ghost portrait should be pretty or picturesque. If there are those who think it would be too difficult to act, they are apt to be persons to whom farcical comicality comes easier, for, as a matter of fact, there are always young women, in any company of amateurs, who are capable at least of acting a sentimental role with truth and taste.

For suggestions on costumes and stage furniture, I should suggest simply this: Get, or look into, the volume of "Little Women," brought out by Little, Brown & Company, Boston, in 1902, and illustrated by Alice Barber Stephens. In these pictures you will find all the hints you need, except for the costume of the little Revolutionary dame in the picture frame—powder and patches are for her, and a gown of 1775, all in white. No color must be about her, except the colors of the flag, used as a background, and it is necessary that she should have an expressive face, pleasing when she smiles. It would be an excellent plan if the portrait, whenever shown, were lighted in some spectacular way, and if

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possible, during the scene when she walks, have the stage darkened, and a strong light thrown only on her.

The arrangement of the picture, for a simple home production, would include first, the large frame. It may be set on a draped box, and fastened securely, far enough out from the wall to admit of the girl's figure standing behind it, then a screen or two or other article of perhaps older fashioned furniture would do to hide her goings and comings from the audience. The curtains might be run on cord, at top of frame. A better way, of course, would be to indulge in a bit of stage carpentry and have the frame built into a false wall.

Any light orchestra, as few or as many pieces as desired, could furnish the music. Give, by all means, the part of MARION to the best actress.

CHARACTERS

MARION VAN ORSDALE — *A young girl of Vermont; an heiress and an orphan.*

GRACE — *Her dearest friend, with strong Yankee prejudices.*

MARGARET AMBER — *A Southern girl who is a cousin of Marion's. In the informal Southern fashion, she is known as Peggy to her family and intimates.*

SALLY SUE — *The darkey cook in Marion Van Orsdale's house. Sally is a "freed nigger" who has been in the family for years.*

THE GHOST — *of a fair young wife of Revolutionary times, who walks from the portrait.*

LIEUT. RICHARD FREMONT — *A young Federal officer.*

PEMBROKE JONES — *An old darkey slave, who comes with Peggy Amber from the South.*

The scene, on the curtain rising, proves to be the sitting-room of the old Van Orsdale mansion. There are two inconspicuous entrances, one in the right wall, and one in the left. In the back wall, L. of C., is a large open window. To the R. of this stands, or apparently hangs, a large picture, the frame being of sufficient size to admit a life-size portrait, but the picture itself is completely covered by long, heavy curtains of dark red.

The furnishings of the room are of the time just at the close of the Civil War, as are the costumes of the two young women, who with their backs to the audience, are eagerly looking out of the window. At the rising of the curtain, and for a few minutes before, the music of the drum and fife is heard playing a patriotic air. At the opening of the dialogue the music (having been loudest at the moment the curtain went up), grows gradually softer, as if it were passing outside the window, at last becoming faint in the distance, but stationary as if from a Square some way off.

Grace first turns from the window. She is a slender, pale girl, daintily dressed in a simple summer

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gown of dark green, a pink rose in her hair. She has just waved out the window the handkerchief which she holds in her hand.

GRACE. You can't see them yet, can you? For me, at least, they have passed out of sight. [*Last faint notes are heard.*] All the music and the flags and the excitement has gone by.

MARION. [*She turns from window at last. A noble-looking girl of great dignity of carriage. She wears a lilac-colored gown.*] I saw him when he turned the corner. [*She is smiling through tears.*] At last, after four long, long years, Dick is coming back to me. Did you notice how thin and brown he looked?

GRACE. Yes; but when he looked up and smiled and waved his hand to you [*she smiles*], he became quite a different person.

MARION. Oh, did you notice that, too?

GRACE. Of course I noticed him. I have a right to do that, haven't I, even if I am not engaged to him?

MARION. [*Putting her hand playfully over the other girl's mouth.*] Hush! I don't feel engaged to him, though I know I am. I shall have to get used to the idea again — after four years.

GRACE. Well, it won't take you long, I think. Not with Dick hanging about you, the way I always remember his doing, hoping something would drop of yours, so that he could pick it up for you. How worn and tired some of the other poor men looked!

MARION. And then, his letters!

GRACE. Yes; his letters! Haven't they been grand ones! Even during his hardest campaigns they have always been so full of — of —

MARION. Yes; of the truest devotion. I ought not to have shown them to you.

GRACE. Then whom would you have had to weep over them with? When a girl hasn't a mother —

MARION. Oh, one doesn't show love-letters to mothers! [*She goes to window and looks out again, while Grace speculatively watches her, toying with the beads at her neck.*] It will take [*coming from window*] — it will take just a few minutes for him to get to his own home, when he leaves his regiment, then he will see his mother —

GRACE. And then he will come running in at that door to see you.

MARION. Yes; he will come running in at that door. [*Covers her face with her hands, as if she were blushing.*] For the first few minutes, Grace —

GRACE. After he comes?

MARION. Yes; right at first, you know, don't leave us.

GRACE. [*In surprise.*] What! Do you want me to be present at your meeting with your lover?

MARION. I don't know. My feelings, you know, — are almost more than I can bear. [*Throws her hands out toward Grace.*] O Grace, was there ever so lucky a girl as I? He has come safe through this cruel war. Was there ever so wonderful a lover — as Dick?

GRACE. I don't know. I have never had a lover. [*She turns away.*]

MARION. Oh dear, forgive me! I forgot. [*Goes to her and lays her arm about the other's shoulders.*] And you are far more worthy than I.

GRACE. I am colder, I suppose. [*Throws off her hand.*] Yet, even though numbers of regiments of our patriotic, self-sacrificing soldiers have arrived home before this, and the first tearful moments of mad excitement and thankfulness have passed, — if I had been you, I could not have waited here quietly for him as you are doing. On a day like this —

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MARION. Quietly ! Feel my heart, how it beats ! I did not dare go into the Square. When my eyes met his — I knew I should — oh, I didn't *dare* to go outside ! I feel so much — I am afraid of it. What a hero he looks ! What a hero he is !

GRACE. That extreme outer composure of yours is a Van Orsdale quality, I have heard. [*She goes to portrait in the back wall R. and flings back curtain, disclosing in frame a young girl all in white, with powdered hair, dressed in elaborate costume of the Revolutionary period. In the distance, from the Square, patriotic music is again faintly heard. A large American flag constitutes the background of the apparent portrait.*] Here she is — the Van Orsdale of the Revolution !

MARION. [*Coming to look over her shoulder.*] Yes ; she was the first daughter born to the Van Orsdale family on American soil. She looks a happy, placid little thing. Have you heard her story ?

GRACE. No.

MARION. She was ardently attached to the American cause, but her young husband joined the English army. They never met again. She loved him, too, they say. And her ghost walks.

GRACE. Oh ! Does she haunt this house ? Is she a ghost ? I should not be afraid of a pretty little ghost like that.

MARION. She will never appear to you. She appears only to persons of the Van Orsdale blood. She haunts this house, because it is here that she and her husband parted — in anger, they say. She tried to induce him to join the American side, and he refused bitterly. [*Music again heard faintly.*] These woes of people long dead seem sad, in the midst of our own gladness. She has been buried almost a century.

GRACE. But she looks happy. I think she is happy in the picture.

MARION. I have always imagined more than a hint of pathos in that brave little smile of hers. But she is

unlike most ghosts. Usually ghosts appear only to those about to have a sorrow, but she shows herself to lovers only, who are on the eve of a great happiness. I lay awake all night last night, hoping to see her.

GRACE. And did you—see her?

MARION. No, I have never seen her. She did not appear.

[Door R. opens.]

GRACE. Some one is coming! [*She hurriedly draws the curtain before the picture.*]

MARION. Yes, yes. [*Pulling at her dress to detain her.*] Don't go—not yet. [*Places her hands on her heart.*] Oh! Already! He could n't keep away. He is ——— [*They come down C.*]

GRACE. No, it is some one else.

[Enter PEGGY AMBER, door R., followed at a respectful distance by her aged darkey servant, PEMBROKE JONES. PEGGY is arrayed all in bright pink or blue, and is very young and beautiful. PEMBROKE carries her bag, and sits down near the door, mopping his brow.]

PEGGY. Is this [*to GRACE*]*—*ah you my cousin, Marion? [*Holds out her hand.*] Please say you ah glad to see me. Ah n't you?

GRACE. I am not Marion.

MARION. [*Coming forward.*] I am glad to see you. [*Shakes her hand.*] I am Marion Van Orsdale.

PEGGY. [*Laughing and giving sigh of relief.*] Then that's all right. [*Unties her bonnet.*]

MARION. Please pardon my pre-occupation, when you came in. This is a very important day for me. A day of great gladness.

PEGGY. Ah, yes! I see it is. I heard the music. I saw the Yankee soldiers pass [*laughing*]*—*what was

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left of them. It is a great day for them. It is also a great day for me — a very — great — day.

MARION. Which cousin of mine are you? I did not know you were coming.

PEGGY. Oh, no, I nevah wrote you! I was in such a hurry. I am Mahgaret Amber. Pembroke! Pembroke!

PEMBROKE. Yes, Ma'am — Miss Peggy.

PEGGY. [*Flying at him and boxing his ears.*] There! you were asleep again! I saw you.

PEMBROKE. Forgib me, Miss Peggy; I'se so old. [*Sits up with very apparent effort to be wide-awake and attentive.*]

PEGGY. I want my net-pins, Pembroke, and hurry up about it. I reckon they're thar in that bag.

PEMBROKE. Yes, Ma'am, Miss Peggy, I'se a findin' 'em, I'se a lookin' for dem. [*Looks in bag.*] Yare they are, right yare.

PEGGY. [*Going to mirror, L.*] Well, bring them to me. [*PEMBROKE limps over to her, gives her the pins, and resumes chair near door, R.*] One's hair does get so awfully shaken down, traveling in these abominable day-coaches. Mothah is in New Yawk — I hate New Yawk.

MARION. And you have come to visit me?

GRACE. New York is a very nice place, I think.

PEGGY. But you should have seen Richmond befo the wah—yes, I left Mama in New Yawk; I told her I was coming to visit you, and she told me she was suah you would n't want to see me. But you do, don't you? [*She comes to MARION and throws her arms around her neck, looking up into her face.*] I've always wanted to see my Nawthern cousin, even long befo the wah. We always wanted you to visit us, but you know when a girl has beaux and balls and sweethearts and things to take up her time, she fahgets how time flies!

MARION. And I expect you have many sweethearts.
[*Drawing away.*]

PEGGY. [*Laughs.*] Oh, yes; I am engaged all the time, moah or less, generally moah, but now I am in love!

GRACE. It must be nice [*sighs*], to have lots of sweethearts. I suppose your temperament is not cold.

PEGGY. [*Laughing.*] Oh, no; I am not cold. I am very ardent, Mama says, about everything. Pem-broke, wake up! Wake up, I say! [*Pokes him with parasol.*]

MARION. Why don't you free him?

PEGGY. Why, he *is* free. And I freed him yestah-day, myself, but he won't leave me. He's been in ouah family for yeahs and yeahs. He's an heirloom. Please ask me to sit down, deah cousin Marion! [*Seats herself on small sofa, and motions to others, who sit on each side of her.*] Won't you come and sit by me? I want you to love me, oh, *so* much! [*Holding MARION's hand, who has seated herself, but keeps glancing to door and window.*] And when youah father died, and we knew you were an orphan, we wanted you so much, we reckoned we could find a handsome husband foh you, but then you went to live with some one else—and then—who do you live with now, Cousin?

MARION. With just myself. This is my house, and since coming of age, I live in it.

PEGGY. Oh! What a nice place to visit! I think I shall stay some time. [*Gets up and flits about. Suddenly points to picture, which is behind curtain.*] What is that?

MARION. Oh! Don't touch it. Some day I will show it to you, not today. [*Listens to footsteps outside.*]

GRACE. It is the picture of—the first American Van Orsdale.

Drawing-Room Plays

PEGGY. I am a Van Orsdale. My mother is a Van Orsdale. May n't I see it, Cousin Marion? It will entertain me.

MARION. No, not now. Come here and talk with me. You are not at all sad, are you?

PEGGY. No; why should I be? Now I allow I'm in love with the dearest fellow, and he is in love with me; oh, very much in love with me, and sometime, mighty soon, I may see him again. How glad he will be to find me once moah!

MARION. Then you haven't lost your family estate, as so many other Southerners have done?

PEGGY. Oh, yes, part of it, all of the niggahs! But then—*he* was there and he wasn't killed, and the wah is oveh. Just think, the wah is at last oveh! And I reckon he won't be in dangah any moah.

MARION. He? Who?

PEGGY. The man I told you about, who is engaged to me. Well, I will go to my room now, and reckon I'll put on anothah dress. Pembroke! Wake up! Wake up! [*Shakes him.*] Why do you sleep all the time, Pembroke Jones?

PEMBROKE. Don' know, lill Miss, 'spect it's case I'm so old.

GRACE. Poor old fellow!

MARION. I will call old Sally to show him a place to sleep. [*Goes to door L.*] And, Grace, I will walk as far as the gate to see if any one is coming.

[*Exit MARION L.*]

PEMBROKE. A place to sleep! Seems like dis ole niggah—dat all he wan' about now—jes' a place to sleep. I'se gettin' on in yeahs, I reckon. Jes' a place to sleep. [*Nods.*]

PEGGY. [*To GRACE.*] You ah my cousin's friend? You don't seem very talkative.

GRACE. Yes; I am going to live with her. How long are you expecting to stay?

PEGGY. [*Laughs.*] What a funny question! How funny you Nothahn girls ah! Why don't you fluff youah hair?

GRACE. Why should I? I am sure you are not at all like the sad daughter of a defeated army of a lost cause.

PEGGY. I am not being a captive in chains for you. [*Laughs.*] But I'll allow thah was some nice men in the Nothahn ahmy. I was not in the wah. I was in——

[*Enter MARION followed by SALLY, who is an old darkey, with red handkerchief turbaned about her head. She wipes her hands on her apron.*]

MARION. Now, Sally will show your servant a room, Cousin Margaret.

SALLY. Oh! Oh! Lawd hab marsy! Who is dat! [*She screams and points at PEMBROKE, who has fallen asleep again.*] Who dat niggah? Who dat old man dar?

PEGGY. Hush, yo old niggah. That's my Pembroke Jones. He's so tiahed.

SALLY. [*Rushes on to old PEMBROKE.*] Dat's Pembroke Jones, suah 'nough! At last dese eyes see ole Pem once moah! Dat's my ole man. [*Shakes him while she weeps from excitement.*] Wake up, wake up, ole man. O Lawd! O Lawd! Dis my ole man. He's mah ole man, alive and well again. Wake up! Wake up! [*Drops on knees beside him with arm about his neck.*]

MARION. Girls! Keep still! Poor things! He is her husband.

PEGGY. Let her lead him out, then. I'm getting tiahed. [*Yawns.*] Niggahs ah so noisy.

SALLY. Ole man, wake up. It's maunin'! It's maunin', Pem.

PEMBROKE. [*Without opening eyes.*] Shuah, Sally! I'se awake, Sally! It's time to go to de cotten fields, I reckon.

Drawing - Room Plays

SALLY. Yes, O Glory! O Lawd! [*Jumping up in excitement and clapping hands.*] It's Sally. Heah's Sally, Pem; heah's old Sally.

PEMBROKE. [*Opening eyes wide and sitting up. He stares at SALLY, who dances before him in uncontrollable excitement. Laughs loud and long.*] Praise be de Lawd, it's Sally. Praise be de Lawd! Praise be — [*He slowly rises and they begin an ancient clog or cake walk, in decrepit fashion, together.*] Doan yo membah de hoe cakes 'cross de ribber, Sal, and de dances at de ole Amber plantation? Yo mah pardner, Sal.

SALLY. Oh, I membah! An' de songs we used to sing; dem days when we was young uns, Pem—O Pem!

PEGGY. Send them out, Cousin Marion. I reckon the old thing must be his wife, who ran away to freedom twenty yeahs ago. Send them out.

GRACE. Yes, lead them out, Marion. What children they are!

SALLY. An' de songs we use to sing, dem ole songs, Pem! [*In wavering voices they sing an absurd old plantation melody, which makes GRACE wipe the tears from her eyes, while she laughs. MARION listens to them while she stands at the window watching down the road. PEGGY drums idly with her fingers, and yawns; at last, in a corner of the sofa, makes herself comfortable with pillows and closes her eyes. At close of song, MARION leaves window.*]

MARION. [*With a glance at PEGGY.*] He is very long in coming. I wonder if anything could have happened. [*She takes each old darkey by the hand.*] Come with me. Old Pembroke is tired with his journey, Sally.

SALLY AND PEMBROKE. Oh, thank you, Ma'am, thank you! [*She leads them out door L. GRACE at window looks out. Music from the Square is faintly heard again. GRACE glances at PEGGY, sees she is apparently*

asleep, and tiptoes from room out door L. After a moment enter hurriedly at door R. the young officer, DICK FREMONT, in Federal uniform. He stops suddenly and looks all about the apartment. Suddenly perceives PEGGY asleep on the sofa, and an expression of joyful amazement comes over his face as he smothers an exclamation. He turns half away, as if to go out again, but stops in door, then steals to the sofa, folds his arms and looks down on her. Suddenly sinks on his knees.]

FREMONT. Peggy!

PEGGY. Oh! [*She opens her eyes slowly, and smiles. Sits up.*] My hero! [*He seats himself beside her on sofa.*] Why don't you kiss me, Dick? [*She pouts.*]

FREMONT. Not here. What long months since I've seen you. Tell me, Peggy dear, how did you come here?

PEGGY. In a horrid cab from New Yawk. I came to visit mah cousin, Marion Van Ohsdale, because ——

FREMONT. Is *she* your cousin? Because ——

PEGGY. Because I thought I might see you heah. Now you may kiss me.

FREMONT. No, no; not here! Where is Marion? I just got back today.

PEGGY. She went out leadin' two niggahs. Now, Dick, I've traveled all these miles to give you a surprise — and you don't seem one bit glad. I'm tiahed, too. [*Yawns.*] Do you love Marion bettah than you do me? [*Coquettishly.*]

FREMONT. Hasn't she told you?

PEGGY. What?

FREMONT. That I was — am engaged to her?

PEGGY. Engaged to her! Engaged to her! Why! [*She leans against high back of sofa as if faint.*] Oh! [*At last smiles, wanly.*] It can't be, Dick, you know, for you're engaged to me. It can't be.

Drawing-Room Plays

FREMONT. Don't! For heaven's sake, don't look like that!

PEGGY. [*Wiping away a tear.*] This makes the wah and all the Southahn Ahmy's suffahings seem so much moah dreadful. Ah yo speakin' true? [*At this moment, when DICK is bending toward her, MARION appears at door behind them, and, with a sudden gesture and change of expression, stands watching and listening.*]

FREMONT. Peggy! Peggy darling!

PEGGY. And aftah travellin' in those horrid cabs all the way from New Yawk—you don't love me, aftah all! Yo ah breakin' mah heart.

FREMONT. Not love you, Peggy? I do love you madly, as I have ever since I first saw your sweet face, as you strolled along by our camp on the old Susquehanna River!

PEGGY. [*Giving him her hands.*] And the moonlight nights, do you remember them, Dick? And the days you all were quartered at ouah old Southahn house—and the jasmine, Dick. You said you loved me—you said it on the poach one moonlight night.

FREMONT. I do love you, but I am telling it to you now for the last time. I shall not tell you again. I am going to marry Marion Van Orsdale.

PEGGY. Why?

FREMONT. Because I am engaged to her. Where is she?

PEGGY. [*She rises and MARION disappears.*] Is this youah Nothahn honah? Then I hate you, and I shall die. [*She falls back on sofa and buries her face on its back, weeping.*]

FREMONT. Don't cry, don't weep so, Peggy darling. I have been a brute. I should never have told you I loved you, but I was mad, Peggy, I could not resist you.

PEGGY. [*Drying eyes and smiling.*] My hero!

FREMONT. [*Groans.*] Anything but hero! And Marion may come in at any moment.

PEGGY. Then I will tell her.

FREMONT. What?

PEGGY. That you ah going to marry her, but that you love me.

FREMONT. No, no, Peggy, no! That would not be right.

PEGGY. No, it would not be right. If you love me, you must marry me. You must, Dick.

FREMONT. I am in honor bound.

PEGGY. To me!

FREMONT. No; to her! [*Rising.*]

PEGGY. Are you glad of it? You don't seem so. You look sort of peakèd ovah it.

FREMONT. Glad! [*Seats himself quickly beside her.*]

PEGGY. Dick, dear, it is now time to kiss me.

FREMONT. I won't. [*MARION appears again.*]

PEGGY. Why not? [*As he bends his head close to hers.*] Why don't you kiss me as you used to do?

FREMONT. Because if I once began, I could never stop. [*Sitting erect.*] Marion might come in at any moment.

MARION. [*She comes forward.*] Marion is here. [*PEGGY draws away from FREMONT, and he rises quickly, bringing himself face to face with MARION.*]

FREMONT. Marion! [*Holds out his hand.*]

MARION. And this is how we meet after four years. [*Disregards his hand.*]

PEGGY. Foah yeahs is such a long time, Cousin. It is the past.

FREMONT. I am glad to be at home again, Marion. There have been times — when I didn't expect to be. But our cause is won.

Drawing - Room Plays

MARION. You are safe through that cruel war — and this is your home-coming — today.

FREMONT. I have known Miss Amber before; I met her when we camped near her home on the Susquehanna —

PEGGY. [*Laughing.*] Hush! Hush! Dick, don't tell all that. I am going to leave you two for a while. I think that is nothing moah than right.

FREMONT. Where are you going?

PEGGY. [*Laughing.*] Don't worry, not back to New Yawk,—yet. And Pembroke did n't take my bag. The lazy niggah! [FREMONT *passes it to her.*] I shall be back in a short time, Cousin [*smiling*], unless you tell me not to. I reckon I can find my room, you-all have a big house. Oh! [*Yawns, stretching arms slightly and gracefully.*] Youah Nohthan climate has sleep in it, too. I'm so tiahed aftah that dread-ful trip in the cars. [*She goes out door L., FREMONT following her with his eyes, and MARION watching him.*] Don't quarrel with him, Cousin. [*Exit.*]

FREMONT. Sit down here, Marion—we have a great deal to talk about. Our wedding day, for one thing! [MARION *seats herself on sofa, and he afterwards beside her.*]

MARION. Our wedding day! What can there be to say about our wedding day?

FREMONT. The date, you remember, is yet to be decided upon, dear Marion.

MARION. You still feel that I am dear to you?

FREMONT. I do. My childhood's playmate and my boyhood's idol you were, Marion.

MARION. And your manhood's —

FREMONT. Ideal!

MARION. Am I your ideal, Dick? Men never marry their ideals.

FREMONT. They do, if their ideals will have them. I have just parted from Mother. She said at the last, "And when are you going to bring Marion home to me?" "Today, tomorrow," I said. My mother is waiting for you. You have not changed.

MARION. And have you not? You are a different man, Dick. I see it in your look, your every gesture. If I married you, I should be marrying the Dick of yesterday, the boy of four years ago, not the man of today.

FREMONT. If! Did you say—if you marry me?

MARION. Yes. One does n't marry a man out of the past. Why, I should be marrying a ghost.

FREMONT. Rather a substantial ghost.

MARION. So you see, Dick——

FREMONT. You do not love me,—any more?

MARION. No, I do not love you any more. [*She says this slowly and with difficulty.*]

FREMONT. Marion! What are you saying? Are you refusing to marry me, after these four long years?

MARION. Have they been so long to you? Where did you know Peggy? Where did you leave her?

FREMONT. At her own home, down South. Are you jealous of Peggy—careless, pretty Peggy? [*Looking out door.*] She will go back to New York to her mother, soon. You and I will seldom see her—very—very—seldom.

MARION. [*Rising.*] And you are willing even now to marry me?

FREMONT. I am waiting. I came back for that.

MARION. It is brave of you, but sometimes a woman is as brave as a man. [*She goes to picture back and draws curtains apart.*] Do you remember it? This is the picture of Margaret Van Orsdale, who gave up her husband's love for love of her country. Proud, pretty, brave Margaret Van Orsdale, she has been in her grave for almost a century. Other women have been as brave.

Drawing-Room Plays

And what difference do her woes make now? They are the woes of a ghost. [*Points out window.*] Out there under the trees, poor Sally Sue and her old husband are getting acquainted again after being dead to each other for nearly the quarter of a century. But I marry no ghost!

FREMONT. Marion! You do love me! [*He has followed her to picture during last speech.*]

MARION. How dare you think so —

FREMONT. You must marry me — I am no ghost.

MARION. You belong now to Peggy. [*Turning to picture.*] This sweet ghost never appeared to me. I know why now. She never will.

FREMONT. Marion! You are unhappy! [*He goes to her side.*]

MARION. How dare you think so! No, Dick, don't mention marriage to me again. [*She draws curtain over picture. Music from Square is again faintly heard.*] Don't pity me, and don't question me. Women, at times, prefer above all things to be left alone. Leave me now. When you walk out that door, my boy lover Dick goes forever, and when you come in again, you come in with Peggy.

FREMONT. No. Don't do this thing, Marion. Let us talk over — a hundred things. Wait!

MARION. I command you to go. [*He looks at her a moment, then walks slowly toward door with head bent.*] Dick! Come back! [*He returns to her.*] You may kiss me good-bye! [*He kisses her on forehead.*] Good-bye, Dick!

FREMONT. Can't you — reconsider?

MARION. No; good-bye.

FREMONT. Good-bye!

[*Exit FREMONT, door L.*]

[*Left alone, MARION puts her hands to her head, as if she suffers. She walks to picture, draws back curtain, looks at face of picture fixedly. Closes the curtain again, Sits on sofa.*]

MARION. Even now, if he loves me, he will come back. [*Music ceases. Outside may be sung verse of darkey song, while MARION seems to wait expectantly.*] He may yet come back to me. Even at this moment, he may have decided that he loves me best.

[*Enter at door L., at close of song, GRACE, wearing garden hat, carrying flowers.*]

GRACE. Has he gone already? I saw him come in, so I stayed away. I suppose I must get used to being a third party now.

MARION. A fourth, perhaps, for there is Peggy, you know.

GRACE. See! These roses! Aren't they lovely? Let me put one in your hair. A white one. Brides always wear white roses. Peggy! Why, she is the most stupid little thing! She does n't count.

MARION. Stupid! Do you think so?

GRACE. Stupid! I should say. Why consider her when she considers no one else?

MARION. Don't! Remember she is my cousin and my guest.

GRACE. Really! Your conscience overdoes its work. What a terrible affair it must be to live with, in everyday life. Now the excitement is over — where is the vase for these flowers?

MARION. On the shelf, under the picture.

PEGGY. [*Speaking outside.*] Let us go in to Cousin Marion now. It is only right to tell her. We Southahn girls have ouah sense of honah as well as you Nothahn men.

GRACE. Who is that? [*Startled.*]

MARION. Peggy, I suppose. She is coming in with Dick. I believe he is trying to decide some question. Perhaps she is helping him.

GRACE. What question?

Drawing-Room Plays

MARION. Oh, just one of those little questions which will make no difference fifty years from now!

GRACE. And only make ghosts walk?

MARION. Oh, to be a ghost like Margaret Van Orsdale would n't be bad—to be able to appear like that, only as a harbinger of joy, and only to that one to whom the joy is coming. [*Grace places the roses.*]

GRACE. [*Looking out L.*] Peggy is still there; does he like her?

MARION. Who?

GRACE. Does Dick Fremont like that little goose? [*With a contemptuous shrug of the shoulders.*]

MARION. I suppose so.

GRACE. Then all I can say is, I'm glad I'm not engaged to him.

[*Enter PEGGY at door L., followed slowly by DICK.*]

MARION. Did you find my garden pleasant, Peggy? Come and sit here. [*Motions her to sit beside her on sofa. DICK stands near door, watching PEGGY, while GRACE, near window, watches him in surprise.*]

PEGGY. Youah gahden is sweet, with hawthon, pinks and bright red hollyhocks. See, I gave Dick one foh his button-hole, but [*sighs*] I miss the scent of the jasmine, and the honeysuckle—oh, it is so sweet down home, on summah evenings! You-all ah such queeah people. Dick says befoah he went away to the wah, you were engaged to him, and he to you, but now you must have gotten anothah sweethaht, for you won't love him, now, so he's going to marry me. Ahn't you, Dick?

FREMONT. That is as Marion says.

GRACE. O Marion! [*Crosses to her.*] Is this true?

MARION. [*Rising and clasping her hands together.*] I thought I had decided. It is so hard to—to—do—it—again.

FREMONT. If you regret your decision — I am still waiting for you.

PEGGY. [*Running to him.*] O Dick! Why do you say that? In the gahden I reckon you said [*he pats her cheek*] I did n't have to go back to New Yawk.

DICK. It is Marion's garden we were wandering in, and all those flowers we picked are hers. [*He looks at MARION, while PEGGY clings to his arm.*]

GRACE. Flowers or no flowers [*throwing her bunch of roses in PEGGY's face*], I am not glad, Dick Fremont, that you are safe home from the war.

PEGGY. Oh! Why — you funny girl, why did you do that? It's bettah to be talkative.

MARION. Grace!

FREMONT. Are you bidding us go, Marion? [*Music is faintly heard.*]

MARION. I — am — [*she hangs her head*] not saying — any — thing. I can't. [*Music.*]

[*Slowly the curtains before the picture open, and from the frame into the room walks the figure of the portrait, the first MARGARET VAN ORSDALE. Though all in the room are looking in that direction, it must be made plain to the audience, by the unchanged expression of the others' faces, that PEGGY is the only one who sees — the ghost. She draws away from DICK, and stands with face full of fear and amazement. The ghost smiles at her. PEGGY slowly smiles back at her. The ghost walks slowly from the picture-frame to the door at the R. down front. PEGGY raises her arm and points at her. DICK and PEGGY stand L. MARION and GRACE have turned toward them.*]

MARION. What is the matter with Peggy?

Drawing-Room Plays

FREMONT. What is it, dear? [*To PEGGY, drawing her to him.*]

[*In the door the ghost pauses again and smiles at PEGGY, then disappears. As she disappears the music ceases and PEGGY leans back in Dick's arm.*]

PEGGY. What was it? [*Breathlessly.*] Who is she? I saw heh go. Who is she? I like heh.

GRACE. There is no one here but us. We saw no one.

FREMONT. You are imagining —

PEGGY. No, no. She smiled at me! What does it mean? I am all of a tremble. O Dick,—she was——

MARION. Was she all in white, with powdered hair? [*In excitement.*] Was she young?

PEGGY. Yes, yes.

MARION. Dead, long ago.

PEGGY. Oh!

MARION. Dressed in a Colonial ball gown, with a white rose in her hand?

PEGGY. Yes, yes. Who is she? Tell me! Where can I find heh? She smiled at me. I want to see heh again. O Dick, go and find heh foh me!

MARION. No, no; don't send him. She is dead, I tell you. [*Runs to picture and draws back curtains.*] It was the first Margaret Van Orsdale. [*Portrait is found in pose the same as usual.*]

PEGGY. [*Holding out arms to picture.*] Yes, yes; that is she. I saw heh. She smiled on me. O Dick! I don't know why, but I am suddenly so strangely happy.

MARION. [*Supporting herself by curtains.*] The question has been decided—but it was fate who did it, not I. [*GRACE takes her hand and looks defiantly at DICK. Music.*]

[*Curtain.*]



III.

PREFATORY NOTE

For the stage setting of AN INNOCENT VILLAIN, an ordinary dining-room, behind folding-doors, will do, although the main situation, that of the owner of the house, forced to seek an opportunity to eat in peace, under his own table, would greatly gain by taking place on a raised platform. The mirth-provoking quality of the farce depends upon the cleverness with which the PROFESSOR under the table is able, by pantomime and facial contortions, to suggest the effect upon him of the conversation about himself which he overhears; upon the masterful manner and terrifying personality with which the actress is able to invest the character of the housekeeper, and the broad farcical comicality brought out in the role of the Swedish servant.

If this role is found too difficult, her nationality could be changed, as she could be a darkey, or Irishwoman or any other "old thing," just as well. But the part of the housekeeper is in reality the most important, and should be given to some one with a decided instinct for exaggerated characterization.

As far as possible the costumes, although all of the

Drawing - Room Plays

present time, should afford as much of a contrast as can be effected. More than a touch of absurdity should be in all, except that of ERNESTINE'S.

Care should be taken that the action does not drag, as in this farce the speeches are long enough to admit of a sharp, quick delivery.

An Innocent Villain

CHARACTERS

MRS. REED — *The housekeeper at the home of Professor Knapp.*

ERNESTINE FLOYD — *A visitor.*

MRS. BUTT-IN — *A neighbor.*

MISS MABEL BUTT-IN — *Her niece.*

FREDA — *A Swedish servant girl.*

WALTER KNAPP — *The young Professor. He is very near-sighted.*

The scene represents the dining-room of the old family residence of the Knapps. A large, round table, C., with chairs, a sideboard, a few pictures, are necessary furniture. On the table (spread with a long, white table-cloth, which reaches the floor on all sides) are only a single knife and fork. The chairs are drawn up to the table. The sideboard set against the back wall, R. C., holds disorderly piles of plates, silver and glass. There should be a door in the back wall, very much L. of C., which leads into a hall. In the wall R., well down toward the front, is another door leading into the kitchen. Curtain rising shows the stage empty.

Knapp enters from door L. C. in an absent-minded manner. He wears a loose morning coat, and is generally careless in appearance. He uses pince-nez glasses, which usually dangle from the end of a cord. He draws out chair from table and seats himself. He picks up the knife and fork. Finds table empty. Puts on glasses and closely examines table.

4 KNAPP. Well, I declare! [*Looks at watch.*] Seven o'clock, too, my usual dinner hour. How annoying! [*Reaches to side table for bell, and rings it rather timidly. A silence of some length ensues. He grows impatient. Takes glass of water on sideboard.*] This is distinctly perplexing. [*Rings bell again. Reseats himself at table.*] Something may possibly have happened. [*Pause.*]

[*Enter FREDA, who wears a large checked apron, and has hair done in tight, absurd manner. She grins broadly.*]

Drawing-Room Plays

FREDA. Ay tank yo bin rang de bell, Profaysur Knapp?

KNAPP. Yes; I rang. [*Putting glasses on nose.*] What a peculiar dress! I don't remember having ever seen one just like it before. [*Drops glasses.*] Is not dinner prepared, Freda?

FREDA. Oh, no! [*With embarrassment.*] Ay tank no, Profaysur Knapp.

KNAPP. Is there, possibly, is there no dinner?

FREDA. Ay tank no, Profaysur Knapp.

KNAPP. Indeed! Isn't there, possibly, going to be any dinner at all?

FREDA. Ay tank no, Profaysur Knapp.

KNAPP. How annoying! [*Sinks back in chair.*] Why not, may I ask, Freda? [*During the following speech, he nods affirmatively and politely.*]

FREDA. Ay bay Swede girl, no can talk Anglish well, Profaysur. [*She eagerly approaches him.*] When Mays Knapp, yor sayster, she bay gone away, like yo know, dis las' week, she bay say, "Freda, take good care mine bruder, Profaysur Knapp." Ay say, "Ay bay only Swede girl, Ay bay good Swede girl, Ay stay and do de cook for heem." But Mays Knapp, before she bay gone away, she know me, Ay bay poor Swede girl, she tank Ay not all, she get new housekaypur, housekaypur, Profaysur, Ay ketch de word — [*laughs*] yo tank so? De housekaypur, she, Mays Reed, she say, Ay tank today, "No dinner tonight, Freda, he bay give no order for dinner. He bay gone out, Ay tank so," she say. "Freda," she say, "Yo put on de old apron and for me black all my old shoe," she say. "Freda, Ay tank yo better black me —"

KNAPP. What do you mean?

FREDA. Ay tank Ay speak Anglish — Ay black me — [*She runs from room.*]

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An Innocent Villain

KNAPP. This continued delay is distinctly depressing.
[*Again looks at watch.*]

[*Re-enter FREDa, carrying arms full of lady's shoes, many pairs of which she arranges with great care on table. KNAPP still seated at table, glasses now off, watches with interest.*]

KNAPP. At last I am to have my dinner. Hasten, Freda. What is the first course tonight? [*Takes up knife and fork, as if to eat, then hurriedly raises pincenez.*] What are those?

FREDa. Ay bay show yo Mays Reed's shoes.
[*Triumphantly.*] Ay black them all myself, today!

KNAPP. Mrs. Reed's shoes! Take them away! Take them away! Take them away, I say! Get out with them! Get out!

FREDa. Oh! [*Bursts into tears.*] Ay bay poor Swede girl—Ay tank—Ay tank so—Profaysur—Knapp—

KNAPP. Remove those objects. [*He turns his back.*]

FREDa. Ah bay good cook. [*Gathers shoes in apron.*] Ay bay good girl, Profaysur.

KNAPP. Leave the room—send the housekeeper to me instantly. Do you understand?

FREDa. Ay [*weeping*] tank—Ay tank so.

KNAPP. Send the housekeeper to me.

[*FREDa goes out through door to kitchen sobbing loudly.*]

KNAPP. I must have been unnecessarily severe, but really this hunger is unfortunately affecting my temper. I must be more patient with these poor helpless women.
[*He seats himself and whistles mournfully.*]

[*Enter MRS. REED. She is an extremely severe woman, no longer young, wearing strict tailor-made clothes, a very high collar. Her manner is most masterful, and altogether alarming to one of timid nature.*]

Drawing - Room Plays

MRS. REED. Good evening, Professor Knapp. [*Severely.*] I believe you wished to see me?

KNAPP. Yes,—I believe I did.

MRS. REED. On a matter of business, perhaps? I am sure you could have sent for me only on a matter of business. [*Folding her arms.*] Being your housekeeper, I must come, of course, whenever the idea enters your head to send for me—I suppose.

KNAPP. Yes, yes, Mrs. Reed. [*Soothingly.*] I suppose so.

MRS. REED. What is this matter of business for which you sent for me, Professor Knapp,—at this most inconvenient hour? [*She strikes attitude of challenge.*]

KNAPP. It was—about dinner.

MRS. REED. Ah! [*Haughtily.*] About dinner!

KNAPP. Yes; *is* there any dinner?

MRS. REED. Don't you be purse-proud and domineering with me, Professor Knapp, for I won't stand it. Of course I am your housekeeper, and a menial position of that sort is to be expected to draw down upon me all sorts of masculine brutality.

KNAPP. I don't mean to be brutal.

MRS. REED. All sorts of masculine brutality, I said. But you may as well know it now as at any other time, that I won't stand it. I have fought the world single-handed [*doubles fists*], as girl and woman for thirty-five years, and I am quite capable of taking care of myself.

KNAPP. I don't doubt it, Mrs. Reed. [*He rises.*]

MRS. REED. Doubt me! Well, I should guess not. If you want to see dishonesty rampant over the country, just look at your own sex, look at the men! Look at the overbearing, obnoxious, spoiled men! [*Follows him.*] Look at them!

KNAPP. I [*looks involuntarily in mirror of sideboard*] will.

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MRS. REED. Well, see that you do. [*Walks to sideboard, turning her back, and drinks glass of water, leisurely, KNAPP meanwhile leaning with back against chair, watching her closely. Surreptitiously rubs his stomach, showing hunger.*]

KNAPP. Mrs. Reed [*timidly*], Mrs. Reed !

MRS. REED. I hear you, sir [*turning and facing him*], and I suppose you are one of the very sort who keep us women from voting. You believe in keeping all the rights to yourself, and leaving *us* nothing but the privileges. [*She again takes attitude of challenge.*]

KNAPP. All I wished to say, Mrs. Reed, is that I think it is time for dinner. I have been busily at work in my study the entire afternoon, have had no time to dress for dinner, as you perceive, but I am ——

MRS. REED. Professor Knapp [*interrupting him so suddenly that he jumps*], I perceive nothing of the sort. I am a logical woman. You did not order dinner, therefore it was not cooked. In fact, if dinner is cooked for you now, I will have to charge extra.

KNAPP. What? [*He sits down suddenly again in chair at table.*]

MRS. REED. When I told your sister [*folding arms*], Miss Knapp, that in her absence I would make home pleasant for you, I particularly specified that I should be always told when you were at home. I consider that not only my privilege, but my right. But you [*pointing at him the finger of scorn*], I saw and heard nothing of you the whole afternoon. Therefore, I presumed you were not at home. Therefore, there is no dinner.

KNAPP. Oh ! [*Wiping glasses helplessly.*] But this is all really amazing.

MRS. REED. Perfectly logical, you see. I suppose you have the audacity of your imitative sex ——

KNAPP. Oh !

MRS. REED. And are surprised to find a logical woman. Am I not logical?

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KNAPP. Perfectly logical ; yes.

MRS. REED. And if you had been as considerate, or as kindly, or as decent [*standing over him threateningly*] as some men — I have read about, you would have called me up, and told me what you wished for dinner. But I expect no consideration from you men.

KNAPP. I wish a roast, and potatoes, and —

MRS. REED. Too late. Too late now, Professor Knapp. It is nearly half-past seven. My own supper is to be set here in a few minutes. You may eat with me, if you like [*tossing her head*]. It is nothing to me what you do.

KNAPP. You are really very kind, but if you don't mind, I had rather not.

MRS. REED. Mind? [*Airily.*] Mind? Of course not. Why should I mind? What are you to me? It was a great condescension for me to accept this opportunity to make home pleasant to you, and I am sure Miss Knapp considered it so. But men are so inconsiderate. Their selfishness is atrocious. Then you will not eat with me?

KNAPP. No, I will not.

MRS. REED. Oh, very well, then ! [*She stalks from room, offended, going out door R.*]

KNAPP. [*Draws deep sigh of relief.*] Dear me, I seem to have a most unfortunate manner — very trying situation, very — where is the pantry, I wonder? — but I haven't the slightest idea where the pantry is, and I wouldn't be caught there by either of those women for anything — I don't like them — I suppose they are both in the kitchen now. They seem improperly talkative — dear me ! A very trying situation, very — and I brought it all on myself. [*He rises and walks toward sideboard.*]

[*Door L. C. opens suddenly and enter MRS. BUTT-IN, followed by MABEL BUTT-IN. They are very much overdressed and women of gushing manner. They do not see KNAPP.*]

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MRS. BUTT-IN. This, you see, ^{my dear} Mabel, is the dining-room, a fine, large apartment with everything complete for the comfort of the occupants. I always *did* wonder how much these curtains cost. [*Feels curtains.*] Miss Knapp said one dollar fifty a yard, but one can never tell. Like mine, you see, these chairs! [*Examines chairs.*] Oh, why, Professor Knapp! You here? This is nice! Such a surprise! This is Professor Knapp, Mabel; my niece, Miss Mabel Butt-In, of Omaha. [*They bow to each other.*] Mabel wanted *so* much to see the inside of this house; she came this morning; she is such an artistic creature, so I brought her right over. Being neighbors, of course, I didn't ring, and then you are *so* good-natured, I knew you wouldn't mind in the least our running in without knocking. You don't, *do* you? I know you don't! [*Gushingly.*]

KNAPP. Oh, no! [*Sarcastically.*]

MRS. BUTT-IN. [*Flatteringly.*] You don't mind *anything*! This, you see, Mabel, is that wonderful old portrait of which I told you, of Professor Knapp's great-grandfather, old Levi Knapp,—such a dear Biblical old name; and this china is *so* old, it is cracked—and priceless. Wouldn't you like to have it, eh, Mabel? [*Nudging her.*]

MABEL. Oh [*to KNAPP*], I just *love* old things, don't you? [*Clasping hands.*]

KNAPP. Yes, Miss Butt-In. [*Patiently.*]

MABEL. Those dear little cracks in the beautiful white china plates,—how much they mean! They call up a wealth of old associations.

KNAPP. They do, indeed. [*Sighs hungrily.*]

MABEL. And just to think, people in quaint old costumes—people have *eaten* off of them!

KNAPP. Just to think of it! [*He pats his stomach significantly.*]

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MABEL. O Professor, can't you just imagine some quaint little potatoes on this plate?

KNAPP. I can, indeed.

MABEL. And to think, even in those days I suppose people ate roast beef, and had their meals regularly, just as we do!

MRS. BUTT-IN. Don't you see now, Professor, why I brought her over? The dear child loves quaint, old things. I am sure she will grow very fond of *you*. She is going to visit me for a month. She is my favorite niece, you know, Professor, and when she marries, I shall give her a row of tenement houses.

KNAPP. Indeed!

MRS. BUTT-IN. I am sure no young couple need starve on that.

MABEL. Oh! Now, Auntie, aren't you too dreadful, talking to the Professor about my getting married, when we have just met him! But sometimes one does feel instinctively that one has met a friend, a true friend, don't you think so, Professor? [*Drawing coquettishly close to him.*]

KNAPP. I do. [*With resigned politeness.*]

MRS. BUTT-IN. You are so sympathetic, dear Professor! Sit down, Mabel, and why don't you sit down, Professor? I declare you look almost uncomfortable.

KNAPP. I, uncomfortable? The idea! [*Laughs mirthlessly.*]

[*The three seat themselves in chairs near table.*]

KNAPP. Pray excuse my smoking-jacket, ladies, but the fact is—I—have been very busily at work all the afternoon in my study, until I was quite overwhelmed with astonishment, when I suddenly found the dinner hour had arrived.

MRS. BUTT-IN. You dear, self-forgetful creature, pondering upon some ancient ode of dear old Pindar, I suppose! [*Looking languishingly at him.*]

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MABEL. Until time and your environment faded, faded away, and dinner was a thing of the past ! [*Clasping hands.*]

KNAPP. Exactly !

MABEL. How marvelous, how beautiful it must be to be a professor of literature and ponder ever upon those fadeless things of the soul, which raise one far, far above the ordinary material things of every-day life ! Don't you *enjoy* the rarified atmosphere in which you live, dear Professor——

KNAPP. Ecstatically !

[*MRS. REED'S voice is at this point heard in the kitchen outside, and FREDa's reply.*]

+ MRS. REED. Freda, put those onions on to boil ! [*Her voice is raised and strident.*]

FREDa. Ay bay only Swede girl, Ay tank Ay no cook onions. Ay go out tonight. [*With voice raised and drawling.*] Ay —— [*Clatter of pans falling.*]

MRS. REED. Boil those onions. Boil those onions.

MRS. BUTT-IN. Well ! [*Still looking toward kitchen door.*] Your servants are quarrelsome ?

KNAPP. I really don't know. I see very little of my servants.

MRS. BUTT-IN. You poor, dear man ! How lonely you seem ! Won't you come to our Tuesday evenings at home ?

MABEL. Do, dear Professor, come in to our Tuesday evenings at home. [*Yearningly.*]

KNAPP. Thanks. Isn't this your Tuesday evening at home ?

MRS. BUTT-IN. Of course it is, Professor. [*Offended.*] How rude of you ! It is our Tuesday at home, but no one came, and every one we telephoned to had another engagement, so we thought we would come over

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here after you. I *thought* you were ever a kind and considerate gentleman, Professor Knapp.

KNAPP. I thought so too — once.

MRS. BUTT-IN. But I see you are getting spoiled, spoiled! [*She moves away to sideboard.*]

MABEL. O Professor, haven't you ever longed for the close companionship of some poetic soul who quite, quite understood you? [*Drawing her chair closer.*]

KNAPP. I have [*with polite smile*] — at times.

MABEL. So hard to find, and yet often so unexpectedly near. Often and often, when reading some sublime passage in Shakespeare, I have longed, actually longed with tears in my eyes, for some near soul, whose hand would press mine at those great times, whose eyes, with mine, would peruse the printed page, and whose heart—but why, oh why, speak of these things!

KNAPP. Why, indeed!

MRS. BUTT-IN. [*She returns to chair.*] Have you never wished, my dear young Professor, for some cultured wife to ascend with you the hill of learning?

KNAPP. No; I shall marry a good cook. [*Savagely.*]

MRS. BUTT-IN. [*Jumps.*] Oh! Dear me! Really, Professor, you are dreadful! Once you told me you sighed for a Cinderella of learning.

KNAPP. Cinderella of learning! Instead of trying shoes on their feet,—I *hate* shoes,—I shall have all the girls I know fry a fish, and I shall marry the one who tastes the best.

MRS. BUTT-IN. [*Screams.*] Who tastes the best! You are nothing short of a cannibal.

MABEL. Remember, dear Aunt, to take into account the eccentricities of genius.

MRS. BUTT-IN. Eccentricities of genius! I guess I

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know plain ordinary bad temper, when I find it. Those *are* pretty curtains.

MABEL. [*To Aunt.*] Hush ! Think, think Professor, how sweetly some little thing in pink would adorn your table !

KNAPP. You mean a shrimp ? [*With enthusiasm.*]

MRS. BUTT-IN. The idea ! You are a brute !

KNAPP. Perhaps I am. [*Defiantly.*]

MABEL. Softly, softly ! This cannot be true of one so exalted in intellect as yourself. You will, won't you ?

KNAPP. I will, what ? [*Restlessly.*]

MABEL. Come to our Tuesday evenings at home.

KNAPP. If there are *any* Tuesdays upon which you *are* at home.

MRS. BUTT-IN. Brute !

MABEL. I know that to leave all this [*waving hand*] must be a trial—to leave this orderly, serious, masculine, cultured household of yours. Such a tranquil atmosphere there is here ! I could dwell here on higher things forever !

[*Enter at door from kitchen, MRS. REED, in an ostentatiously disapproving manner. Without appearing to notice the three seated at the table, she sets it with dishes, etc., from sideboard, her movements giving every sign of acute disfavor.*]

MRS. BUTT-IN. What does this mean ? Are we to have a supper ?

MRS. REED. I am to have supper. It is my supper hour, madam, the only one I have—such as it is. It is not only my privilege, but my right to eat my supper, even though only a downtrodden woman. [*Other women exchange stares of haughty astonishment. KNAPP acts frightened.*]

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MABEL. As we were saying, my dear Professor, of course you could feel congenial only with a lover of poetry and philosophy.

MRS. REED. Freda! [*Calling loudly.*] Freda! Bring on those onions.

FREDA. Yes. [*Answering outside.*] Yes, Mays Reed, Ay bay acomin'.

MRS. BUTT-IN. Well, I never! What actions!

KNAPP. You see, Mrs. Butt-In, they possibly do not understand about these Tuesday evenings at home.

MRS. BUTT-IN. Brute!

MRS. REED. Well [*to KNAPP*], why don't you introduce me to your lady friends?

KNAPP. What? [*Hand to ear.*] What?

MRS. REED. Introduce me! [*Commandingly. Loudly in his ear.*] Introduce me!

KNAPP. Oh! Mrs. Reed, this is my friend and neighbor, Mrs. Samuel Butt-In. [*She bows distantly.*]

MRS. REED. Happy to make your acquaintance. [*Primly.*]

KNAPP. And her niece, Miss Mabel Butt-In, of Omaha. [*He thrusts hands in pockets in almost a reckless manner, as if ready for anything.*] Perhaps they would like to eat — they may be hungry.

MRS. REED. Happy to make your acquaintance. You're women, at least. [*Seats herself.*] Don't you think women should vote?

MABEL. Oh, my thoughts are on higher things!

MRS. REED. Bosh!

[*Enter FREDa bearing plates of onions, meat and bread on a tray.*]

KNAPP. Dear me! [*Takes hands from pockets and straightens up.*] I think I smell something to eat. It *must* be something to eat.

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MRS. REED. ~~This is my supper.~~ [*She rises and glares at him.*] This is my supper, which, sir, you refused to eat with me.

MRS. BUTT-IN. Come, come, Professor, let us leave the disgusting creature—to her feed. [*She rises, laying a hand on KNAPP's arm and glaring at MRS. REED.*]

MRS. REED. Disgusting! [*They face each other.*]

FREDA. Ay bay a good cook.

KNAPP. Meanwhile, ladies, the food is getting cold.

MABEL. Come with us, dear Professor [*rising*], into the library, where we can look at your delicious books.

KNAPP. Certainly! [*He sighs but rises.*] Certainly!

MRS. BUTT-IN. Let us go into the parlor and forget this coarse scene, and—those onions.

MRS. REED. They will be eaten up in just about two minutes—everything will be eaten up. [*KNAPP winces.*]

KNAPP. Oh!

MABEL. No wonder your sensitive nerves are irritated, dear Professor. Come with us. [*MRS. BUTT-IN and MABEL take each one of his arms, and escort him toward door, L. C.*]

KNAPP. Freda makes [*looks longingly at food*] very good meat pies.

MABEL. Meat pies! I want to discuss Emerson with you, dear Professor.

MRS. REED. The Professor [*seats herself at table facing audience*] is too purse-proud to eat with me. He prefers Emerson. ~~Let him have his Emerson.~~

MRS. BUTT-IN. Well, I should say so! [*They lead him remorselessly on to the door.*]

[*Exeunt KNAPP, MRS. BUTT-IN and MABEL.*]

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MRS. REED. I am glad those smarties have gone. Now, Freda, you may set down those dishes.

FREDA. Oh, Ay bay tired ! [*She takes them from tray and puts on table.*]

MRS. REED. Now say, "Dinner is served."

FREDA. "The dener bay served," Ay tank so. [*Rubs arms in apron.*]

MRS. REED. Pass me the salt.

FREDA. Here it bay.

MRS. REED. Silence ! Now stand behind my chair. [*She eats with a very apparent good appetite.*] Freda ! [*FREDA standing behind her chair does not answer.*] Freda ! Freda, answer me this minute ! [*Without turning.*]

FREDA. [*Coming from behind Mrs. REED's chair.*] Ay no can talk bayhind yo, Mays Reed, Ay tank Ay no can talk when Ay bay back of a person, because Ay sure not it is to me they bay speakin'. Now Ay see, Mays Reed, yo bin speakin'.

MRS. REED. Go and get me those preserves I told you not to give Mr. Knapp for luncheon.

FREDA. Ay tank no. [*With visible embarrassment.*]

MRS. REED. Why don't you go ?

FREDA. Ay tank there bay no more those leetle preserves. Ay tank not.

MRS. REED. Where are they ? What have you done with those preserves ? Answer me this minute. [*Rapping table.*]

FREDA. My man Ole, Ay tank so, he ate 'em.

MRS. REED. Ole ! Ole ate them ! I told you to save them for *me*. If he does this again, I will reduce your wages. I'll—treated as I am, I must have preserves. I will reduce your wages.

FREDA. Oh, no ! [*Gets on knees.*] Oh, no ! Ay bay good cook. Ay clean shoes. Ay wash hankcheafs, Ay——

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MRS. REED. Stop! Go and open some fruit for me.

FREDA. Ay will. [*Rises.*] Mays Reed, wait. Ay will bay back. [*She runs out door to kitchen.*]

[*MRS. REED left alone pretends to eat. Leans back in chair, and drums haughtily on table with fingers. FREDA re-enters, laughing hilariously.*]

FREDA. [*Giggles.*] Here bay the fruit. [*Giggles.*]

MRS. REED. What are you laughing about?

FREDA. Ha! Ha! Ha! Ho! Ho! Ho! It bay so funny.

MRS. REED. Tell me instantly! What are you laughing about? Tell me, I say.

FREDA. [*Between giggles.*] It bay so funny. It happen las' night when Ole and me we go ball, Ay tank, Swede people's big ball, yo know; Ay go with Ole, and Ole he go with me. Ay put on my bes' dress, all red, yust like Mays Knapp's dress—it is Mays Knapp's dress—my best dress is Mays Knapp's red dress. Ay look ver grand, all the Swede mens dey tank so. Dey say as Ay bay walkin' in with Ole—and Ole with me—who bay dat Swede girl in red? Ay tank when Ay hear dem say dat—Ay bay goin' have pardners e-nough for poor Swede girl *one* night. Ole he tank so, too. Yo know he no like it—yo know? Yo been married?

MRS. REED. Not at present. Don't mention men to me.

FREDA. [*Rapidly.*] Ole be one ver nice Swede man, Ay tank so, but he get mad. Ole see all de Swede mens look at me, Ay bin see it, too, and he get mad. Slow he get mad, but it's pretty mad, when he do bin get mad. Ay bin dance with Swede mens and Ole *sometimes*. Yon Yonsen he ask me to dance. Ay tank Ay will. Ole say no, Ay can no dance with dat Yon Yonsen. Ay tank so, and Yon Yonsen tank so, but Ole he tank not. Come on, yump up, say Yon to me, and

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Ole he yump up. Oh, it bay so funny! [*Laughs hilariously.*] It bay such a good yoke. He bay hit Yon in de nose, Yon he hit him on de ear. Ole hit Yon on de head, Yon hit Ole in de teeth. Oh, it bay so funny! I yust stand there und laugh und laugh. Yon take Ole by his coat, his new coat, and he bin throw heem out of door. He roll heem out of door. Such a yoke on Ole. [*Laughs.*] Yon say, "Yo stay out here, yo big bully, yo cow-ard—yo yealous hoosband, yo idiot yo," and he kicked him in de face. [*Laughs.*] Sich a yoke, "yo big Norwegian wharf-rat, yo Norwegian," and all de time, all de time, he bay yoost Swede man, and punch his face. [*Laughs.*] Sich a yoke. Yon call Ole all that and Ole bay yoost Swede man all de time, and that sich a good yoke on Yon. [*Laughs.*]

MRS. REED. [*Severely.*] I don't see anything funny about that. In fact, it is not a joke at all. Pass the pepper.

FREDA. Ain't dat a yoke? It vas a yoke las' night.

MRS. REED. Pick up my napkin.

FREDA. Ay vill.

MRS. REED. The impudence of you servants! I flatter myself I'll teach you your place. Remove the onions.

FREDA. Ay vill. Ole likes onions. [*Exit FREDA.*]

MRS. REED. Freda! Freda! How weary the lower classes make one! Freda! [*FREDA comes running in.*]

MRS. REED. Refill the pitcher [*with an excess of haughtiness*]. [*FREDA goes out.*] There! I forgot to tell her to bring in the pudding. How tiresome servants are [*with grand air*]! She may give it to Ole. [*Lis-tens at door.*] I believe he is out there. What impudence! [*She walks out through door to kitchen, with aetermined air.*]

[*KNAPP, as soon as she has disappeared out one door, enters the other. He has changed his coat. He first puts head in, warily, then find-*

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ing room empty, steals in. He suddenly sees bread on table. He runs to it, reaches for it, then listens. He runs about, listening at doors. At last dares to come to table and take pieces of bread. An expression of great joy comes over his face, as he eats, which suddenly changes to one of fear as voice is heard without.]

MRS. REED. [*Her voice raised outside.*] ~~Send~~ Ole home! 90

FREDA. Ole, he will not go, Ay tank not. He ~~say~~ bay hoongry.

MRS. REED. [*Without.*] I will tell ~~him~~ ^{you} to go. I fear no man. ~~But first~~ I am going back to finish my dinner.

[Showing every sign of fear, KNAPP, with bread in hands, suddenly darts under the table, just as MRS. REED enters. He leaves up the cover of the table-cloth, which is toward audience; other long ends of table-cloth falling to floor hide him from those on the stage. He is, however, plainly visible to audience, seated on floor under table, munching bread. MRS. REED comes in and resumes seat.]

MRS. REED. [*Rapping on table.*] Bring that fig pudding!

[Enter FREDA with pudding and weeping loudly.]

FREDA. Ole, he say he will not go home. Ay tank he mean what he bin say. He slow man, but when he get mad, he pretty mad.

MRS. REED. Where is the Professor? Tell him to put Ole out of the house. I ~~won't have any more of my preserves catch up.~~ Go get Professor Knapp. [*Stamping foot.*]

FREDA. No, oh, no! Ay tank not. Ole ver big man, und he pretty mad man, he will keel de Profaysur. If Ole keel de Profaysur Ay bin afraid look Mays Knapp

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in de face again, when she come home, and bin say, "Yo, Freda, where de Profaysur gone?" Ay afraid look Mays Knapp in face if Ole keel de Profaysur.

MRS. REED. Go! Find the man of the house, and tell him I *insist* upon his throwing Ole out of *my* kitchen.

FREDA. [*Apron over head.*] Oh, oh! Ole will keel de Profaysur. [*She goes out door L. C.*]

[MRS. REED *rises and looks in kitchen, door R.*
KNAPP *puts out arm and steals another piece of bread from table, remaining hidden.*]

MRS. REED. [*To OLE out door R.*] Get out, you horrid thing, you!

[*In consternation KNAPP subsides. She sits again at table and eats pudding. Suddenly loud crash in kitchen is heard.*]

MRS. REED. [*Rising.*] What is that? That big Swede must be in a perfect rage. Oh! *Why* doesn't the Professor come? [*Another crash. She wrings hands.*]

[*Enter FREDA, door L. C., hurriedly. She crosses stage.*]

FREDA. De Profaysur is gone, he bay not in de house. De house bay all dark, und de Profaysur bay gone away. He bay gone away. Ole bin not keel him dis time, Ay tank not. [*She goes out door R.*]

MRS. REED. How tiresome [*with air of languid elegance*] I find the lower classes!

FREDA. [*Without.*] Don't yo bin want more preserves, Ole? [*Her voice is one of cajolment.*]

MRS. REED. There! She is feeding him up again. Such are wives! [*She rises from table, giving KNAPP another opportunity to get cake from table. As she turns back, she speaks.*] I must have been as hungry as a man, tonight. All that cake gone at one meal, and I don't feel at all as if I had eaten it. —My dyspepsia must be better. [*She stands C. and yawns, facing audience. Suddenly door L. C. behind her is opened, and ERNESTINE FLOYD,*

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who is a pretty young girl in blue, rushes in, goes to her and puts hands over MRS. REED's eyes.]

MRS. REED. [*Screams.*] Unhand me, Ole, or I shall call for the police.

ERNESTINE. Guess! [*Laughing.*] Guess who it is!

MRS. REED. That is not Ole's voice.

ERNESTINE. I should say not.

MRS. REED. Let me go; are you a book agent?

ERNESTINE. Yes. [*Laughing.*] Yes. Tremble at your fate. [*She drops hands. The two stand facing each other in great surprise.*]

MRS. REED AND ERNESTINE. Who are you?

ERNESTINE. Oh! I thought you were Miss Knapp.

MRS. REED. I am not. She is out of town. I am the woman who is making home pleasant for Professor Knapp.

ERNESTINE. Oh! Are you—I didn't know—I hadn't heard. [*Seats herself in great agitation.*] Are you—are you—why didn't some one tell me—so you are his wife!

MRS. REED. His wife! What an insult! Why, I wouldn't marry Professor Knapp if he should ask me on his knees forty times over, and no one else would, if they knew all I know about his terrible temper.

ERNESTINE. Oh! I didn't know. He didn't *used* to have a temper. I am Ernestine Floyd. [*Under the table KNAPP, who has been listening in great excitement, tries to get a peep at her.*] He used to be so nice. I have been away, traveling abroad for four years, and I got back home again just yesterday. They told me the Professor was away, but I thought I would come and surprise his sister and spend the night with her. My box is in the hall.

MRS. REED. Well, if the Professor were here, I should order him to carry it upstairs for you. You may

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visit me. Professor Knapp has left the house, in his usual inconsiderate manner, and is nowhere to be found.

ERNESTINE. Then I will stay. He need never know I have been here. How is he? I suppose just as happy with his books as ever. They seem to satisfy him so. [*She walks about the room in dreamy fashion.*] Just the same dear old chairs. Just the same dear old room, where we have had so many cosy little dinners. What delightful little dinners we used to have! [*Under the table KNAPP wipes away a lonesome tear.*] And now I am four years older. I wonder if he will find me changed. [*Looks in mirror.*] I am prettier than I used to be. How is he?

MRS. REED. How is he? How should I know! He is a most purse-proud and overbearing individual I think. I have none of his company, nor do I want it.

ERNESTINE. He used to be a man of great dignity. That was what I liked about him—I never in my life saw him in an undignified position. I could not bear him if I thought he ever came off his pedestal. [*Standing near table.*]

MRS. REED. Oh, well, he does! All men do!

ERNESTINE. He seemed so different from other men. He never did anything silly.

MRS. REED. Humph! Well, he does now.

ERNESTINE. How do you know?

MRS. REED. Only judging him by other men. I hate them. All men are silly.

ERNESTINE. I am sure he isn't. I can imagine him at this minute somewhere on a lecture platform, lecturing to the students, upon "The Dignity of the Ascetic Life," or something of that sort. He is certainly a man one can respect, who is never frivolous and never impulsive.

MRS. REED. Bosh!

ERNESTINE. It must be so nice for him to have you here, in his sister's absence, to make home pleasant for him.

An Innocent Villain

MRS. REED. Yes ; he seems to enjoy it very much.

ERNESTINE. [*Sighs.*] He is quite contented with his books. [*Walking about.*] Everything in the room is just as I left it. How many times in the grand canal in Venice, or ~~on top of Notre Dame~~ in Paris, have I thought of this dear, quiet old room ! [*KNAPP, under table, shows renewed signs of hunger.*] [*Loud noise, startling all, is again heard out door R.*] Oh ! What is that ?

MRS. REED. [*Goes to door.*] It is our cook's husband, Ole Oleson. [*Comes back to table.*] When the Professor returns I shall order him to put Ole out. [*Noise again.*]

ERNESTINE. Oh ! [*Clasps hands.*] I hope I shall never see Professor Knapp doing anything so rough. I could never like him again. [*FREDA enters, running in at door R.*]

FREDA. Oh, Mays Reed, Ole bin breakin' tings, Ay tank so ! He say yo bin give him de—de—pig puddin' some, or he come get it. Ay tank he will. He slow mans, but when he bay mad, he pretty mad mans. He bay mad man now.

[*Loud banging on door R. All three women scream and huddle together.*]

MRS. REED. [*In trembling voice.*] The pudding is all gone ; unfortunately, I ate it. Freda, go lock that door.

FREDA. Ay bay afraid. [*Gets behind ERNESTINE.*]

MRS. REED. Go ! Lock that door ! We won't go out there again. If only the man of the house were here ! [*FREDA crosses stage stealthily, locks door R., then calls through keyhole.*]

FREDA. Go way, Ole ! Go way, yo Swede man, yo. Go home, Ay bay come home tomorrow, cook yo ni-i-ce pancake for breakfast. Go home, Ole !

MRS. REED. Stop ! Who will cook *my* breakfast ?

Drawing-Room Plays

ERNESTINE. I will. [KNAPP shows excitement and peeps out at her.]

MRS. REED. Can you cook? I ~~thought menial labor was confined to the lower classes.~~ I never cook. [Haughtily.]

ERNESTINE. You miss lots of fun. I went to cooking school. I can cook nut cake and lemon pies.

[KNAPP shakes hands with himself.]

MRS. REED. I don't want nut cake or lemon pie for breakfast.

FREDA. He bay gone to sleep now. [Comes from keyhole, down front.] Ay tank so. He bay dat kind man. Mostly very slow man, except if he get mad, Ay bin tell yo. Oh! [Screams.] Oh! [Screams loudly.]

MRS. REED AND ERNESTINE. Oh! Oh! What is the matter?

FREDA. [Points.] There bay a burgle-mans under de table. Ay tank so. Oh!

ERNESTINE. I ~~am~~ interested. Perhaps she sees a burglar.

[Under the table KNAPP is seen by audience taking suggestion, and fixing napkin over his face for mask, making holes in it for his eyes, with pocket-knife.]

MRS. REED. [To FREDA.] Stop! Idiot! There is no one there.

FREDA. Ay bay poor Swede girl—not id-i-ot. [She suddenly darts at KNAPP and drags him out from under table. He is tying mask over his face, and stands C.]

ERNESTINE. ~~At last~~ I see a real burglar! Oh, joy!

MRS. REED. Sir! What are you doing in my house? Leave it. Call Ole, Freda. [To KNAPP, triumphantly.] You see, we have a man in the house.

FREDA. Ole! Ole! Ole!

An Innocent Villain

KNAPP. Ladies [*raises hand*], be quiet. I am a gentleman burglar. [*Speaking in disguised voice.*]

MRS. REED. What is that?

KNAPP. A burglar who harms no one and never steals anything.

ERNESTINE. Do you read, too?

KNAPP. Oh, often! I enjoy Dickens.

ERNESTINE. Oh, do you? So do I.

KNAPP. I also read Ibsen.

ERNESTINE. Oh! Then you must be *very* much of a gentleman.

[*Door L. C. suddenly opens and enter hastily, in much excitement, Mrs. BUTT-IN, followed by MABEL BUTT-IN. As they come in, KNAPP turns his back.*]

MRS. BUTT-IN. What has happened? In the midst of our Tuesday evening at home we heard the most dreadful screams from this house. Who has been murdered?

MRS. REED. No—one—yet. It is only a man. Mrs. Butt-in, let me make y' acquainted with my friend, Miss Ernestine Floyd, and also Miss Mabel Butt-In.

ERNESTINE. How do you do? [*Staring at KNAPP's back.*]

MRS. BUTT-IN AND MABEL. Glad to meet you. [*All shake hands, staring at KNAPP.*]

MRS. BUTT-IN. And who is that? [*Points at KNAPP.*] [*To MABEL.*] Perhaps he will do for our Tuesday evenings at home.

MABEL. Perhaps he will. We need men.

MRS. REED. Mrs. Butt-In and Miss Mabel Butt-In, allow me to introduce you to—the burglar! [*KNAPP turns, facing them and audience, the women being down front.*]

Drawing-Room Plays

MRS. BUTT-IN AND MABEL. A burglar! [*They cling together.*] Oh! Oh! A masked man!

KNAPP. Ladies [*he bows*], I am glad to meet you. [*Solemnly.*]

MRS. BUTT-IN. Oh! A man, of course, but a burglar!

[*She gets behind MABEL. All the women try to get behind each other, pushing for the place last in line; all at length behind ERNESTINE.*]

ERNESTINE. But he is a gentleman burglar.

MABEL. Perhaps he is. [*Approaches him.*] Such things often happen — in the newspapers.

MRS. BUTT-IN. But where is ~~poor~~ Professor Knapp? [*Snores are heard from kitchen.*] This gentleman burglar may have murdered him in his tracks, before he came into this room. [*Snores again heard.*] He may be murdered.

FREDA. [*On knees at keyhole to kitchen door.*] Ole! Ole! That Swede mans bay asleep.

MABEL. And even at this minute [*standing C.*], murder may have been done!

ERNESTINE, MABEL AND MRS. BUTT-IN. [*To burglar, approaching him hand-in-hand.*] Where is Professor Knapp?

KNAPP. Ladies, pray be calm. There is no reason for this fright. All that is necessary is for you to get out of my way and allow me to pass through the door. I am only too anxious to escape. [*Takes step toward door.*]

MRS. REED. Stop! What have you in your pockets? [*She stands threateningly before the door.*]

KNAPP. Madam, nothing at all. [*He turns pockets inside out, disclosing nothing but a few crusts.*]

ERNESTINE. Perhaps the poor man is hungry.

MABEL. He must not leave, dear Aunt, he must not, until he has informed us what he has done with the body of poor, dear Professor Knapp.

An Innocent Villain

ERNESTINE. Oh! Do you think he has murdered him?

MABEL. [*To burglar.*] Have you murdered poor, dear Professor Knapp?

KNAPP. Professor Knapp, I beg to inform you, ladies, is quite safe.

ERNESTINE. Of course. This man is a gentleman, he is not a murderer. Pray have a chair, Sir, if you are tired. Why do [*to MABEL*] you always refer to Walter Knapp as a poor dear? What is he to you?

MABEL. He is a very dear and sympathetic friend — I can say no more, at present.

ERNESTINE. I understand, perfectly. [*Wipes away tears.*] Oh, I have come home too late! After all, what does it matter?

KNAPP. Ladies, will you now allow me to pass?

MRS. REED. First, Sir, perhaps you would like to have a little supper before you go. [*He stops with comical eagerness, striking attitude of expectancy.*] I am sure you are innocent. You seem to have stolen — only crusts. I will get you some of my cold meat, and fruit, and a little —

KNAPP. [*Eagerly.*] Fig pudding?

MRS. REED. If there is any left. [*She goes to sideboard.*]

MRS. BUTT-IN. Poor man! He seems very hungry! Such a fine, strong-looking figure, too!

KNAPP. I haven't had anything but bread to eat since —

MABEL. For two days, I suppose.

KNAPP. It seems that long. [*Sighs.*]

MABEL. I suppose the business of burglary is a very arduous one?

KNAPP. Very!

Drawing-Room Plays

[MRS. REED and FREDa bustle about, getting eatables from sideboard, which they put on table.]

MRS. REED. Sit here, please. [*He sits at table.*]
Here is a napkin — Professor Knapp's, but he won't mind your using it.

MRS. BUTT-IN. Yes; he is such a good-natured man.

[KNAPP seats himself at table, facing audience; ladies occupy chairs about him, FREDa's attention being divided between him and the keyhole.]

MRS. REED. ~~I see you are embarrassed, Sir.~~ Won't you remove your mask? You could eat better. You are among friends.

[KNAPP takes, with great relish, a mouthful under his mask.]

ERNESTINE. But I suppose you don't want us to know who you are!

KNAPP. Indeed, I don't. [*He eagerly samples food.*]

MABEL. Oh, don't have him remove his mask! It is so much more romantic this way. How he enjoys eating! It does one's heart good.

FREDa. [*At keyhole.*] Ole! Ole! *but don't tell!*

~~KNAPP. The Swede man is undoubtedly asleep.~~

~~MRS. REED. Yes, quite, or we wouldn't dare give you the pudding. What a queer voice you have! It is almost attractive.~~

MABEL. I suppose you don't want us to see your face, or we might know you again. We might meet you again — in society, perhaps. Why, you might even come to our Tuesday evenings at home.

KNAPP. Possibly! I may have been there already tonight. It is Tuesday.

MRS. BUTT-IN. Oh! What did you take?

An Innocent Villain

KNAPP. Nothing! There was nothing I wanted. Ladies, have pity upon me! If you really feel kindly disposed to me, and this ~~very~~ excellent supper attests the warmth of your feelings, please go out of the room and leave me for a few minutes alone with this young lady. [*Pointing to ERNESTINE.*]

ERNESTINE. Oh, no! Oh, don't!

MRS. REED. We'll stay within call. We wouldn't miss any more of this than we have to. Now you do it, Ernestine. My curiosity must be satisfied.

FREDA. Don't bay scared. [*To ERNESTINE, with broad grin.*] Ole he bay in kitchen.

ERNESTINE. ~~But he is sound asleep.~~

MRS. BUTT-IN. We will, ~~now, my dear~~ [*rises*], leave you for a few minutes alone with the burglar. ~~It is all most interesting.~~ Come, Mabel.

MABEL. I think he might have chosen me. [*They all rise but ERNESTINE.*]

ERNESTINE. Wait! [*Taking off rings.*] These are all of value I have about me [*passing them to burglar*]. I know you are a gentleman burglar, but I prefer you should take these things *now*. Then you will have no temptation to murder me.

KNAPP. [*Pushing them back toward her.*] Thanks! No!

MRS. REED. What nobility he shows! We will stay in the next room.

[*MRS. BUTT-IN, MABEL, FREDA and MRS. REED go out of door L. C. They each in turn return, and peep in at door, then at last disappear.*]

KNAPP. Are we entirely alone? Have they gone?

ERNESTINE. They have, but only in the next room, remember. I can't imagine why you had the impertinence to make this request, unless I am to be the one to receive your dying confession.

Drawing - Room Plays

KNAPP. [*Pulling off napkin.*] Do I look like a dying man?

ERNESTINE. Walter! [*Buries face in hands.*]

KNAPP. Yes, I am poor, dear Professor Knapp. [*Pause.*] After four years, look at me. Are you angry?
~~with me?~~

ERNESTINE. Why are you in this masquerade?

KNAPP. It is too long a story to tell now. Mrs. Reed might come in.

ERNESTINE. Tell me, are you, ~~have you been in love~~ with that girl out there? ~~I mean~~ that Miss Mabel Butt-In. ~~She seems to know you so well.~~

KNAPP. I met her for the first time only half an hour ago, ~~upon my word.~~ What is the matter, Ernestine? I am so glad you are back.

ERNESTINE. Really, you look — almost silly.

KNAPP. All men do, when they propose; ~~don't~~ ~~scorn me on that account.~~ I need you so much. Will you be my wife?

ERNESTINE. I don't know.

KNAPP. Do you doubt my love? I am so glad you are back again at last. I hope now to eat more regularly. Will you marry me?

ERNESTINE. I don't know.

KNAPP. Please try to know, Ernestine, dear. Please try to know quickly. They will all be back here presently. If you will now allow me, I will put the mask in my pocket. Answer me, dear one, will you be my wife? [*Loud banging is heard at door R.*]

ERNESTINE. Oh! What is that? [*Looks fearfully at door.*] It is that awful Swede man. [*Puts arms around KNAPP's neck.*] ~~He may come in.~~ I am so frightened. Yes, I will be your wife. [*At this point, the door L. C. opens and all the other women rush in. ERNESTINE draws away from KNAPP.*]

An Innocent Villain

MRS. REED. [*Sternly and disapprovingly.*] Professor Knapp! *You* here! Where is the burglar?

ALL. Yes, where is the burglar, ~~Professor Knapp~~?

KNAPP. He went. [*Loud bang on door R.*] I think I saw some one go into the kitchen — possibly.

FREDA. Ole! Ole! [*She unlocks door and goes into kitchen.*] [*KNAPP rises.*]

KNAPP. Meanwhile, pardon me, but I have somewhat lost my interest in burglars. This, ladies [*taking ERNESTINE by the hand*], is my future wife. She has promised to make home pleasant for me.

ERNESTINE. I am going to try. [*Stands by KNAPP.*]

MRS. BUTT-IN. I guessed as much, when I saw what I saw when I came in. Well, I'll warrant *she* won't get a row of tenement houses on her wedding day.

KNAPP. No. [*Proudly.*] But she can cook! ~~Hurrah~~ for lemon pies!

Oh! MABEL. Indeed. [*Scornfully.*] Cook! ~~Horror!~~ Indelicate!

MRS. REED. Then I suppose [*standing L.*] that soon, for the twenty-fifth time this year, I shall be out of a place. Such are men!

[*KNAPP and ERNESTINE stand by table C., MRS. BUTT-IN and MABEL R., MRS. REED L.*]

[*Curtain.*]



IV.

PREFATORY NOTE

It seems scarcely possible that any difficulties whatsoever could be met with in the presentation of so simple a farce as the following. Its humor depends decidedly more upon the situations than upon the lines, so that care must be taken in developing them. Women parts again predominate in this, because it has almost invariably been found that whereas the amateur actress grows in abundance and in clusters, the amateur male star (with time to spare "from business") is a somewhat rare quantity.

Costumes in ART FOR ART'S SAKE should be modern and in the prevailing fashion for all the characters but that of KING, who should have some absurd pose of costume. In acting the farce care should be taken not to hurry the lines.

Drawing-Room Plays

CHARACTERS

- MINA ARCHER — *A severe-minded young woman who is studying art in a strange city.*
- VIOLA BLANCHARD — *Her friend. A pretty girl whose life is devoted to her music, and who eschews the frivolity of masculine society.*
- MRS. MACARTHUR — *Their chaperone who has accompanied them from their "home town." Something in her appearance should be absurd.*
- NEWTON KING — *A young literary man.*
- J. MORTON PHILLIPS — *A wealthy young clubman. He should be much the larger of the two. He must be able, while hidden in recess, to show much facial expression.*
-

The scene is set in the living-room of the apartment occupied by the three women. It is furnished comfortably, but is in somewhat careless disorder. In the back wall is a door near the center, which is the only opening or place of exit in the room. In the left-hand back corner of the stage must be arranged a closet of curtains, or a tall wardrobe, which can be used as a hiding-place. To give the audience a full view of this no furniture must be in that side of the room, except an artist's easel, to the L. very much down the front, and a chair near it. In the R. set out from the wall is a piano with stool; this piano, placed sideways a few feet from front of stage, affords another hiding-place, the recess behind it being screened off from the rest of stage, but open toward the audience and containing two seats. The remaining furniture consists of a table, back to the R. of the door, a large easy rocking-chair down front, R. of C., and a small sofa for two down front L. of C.

Curtain rising discovers Mina painting at easel L., Viola practicing five-finger exercises, or scales, R. at piano. They are engrossed in their work for a minute or more. Clock strikes two.

MINA. Viola, darling, the clock just struck two.

VIOLA. I heard it, my dear. [*Stops practicing.*]

Art For Art's Sake

MINA. I thought perhaps you didn't know how late it was. That chrome yellow is too ight for grain-fields. I think I'll tone it down a bit. [VIOLA resumes practicing.]

MINA. Are you not going to your music lesson, Viola?

VIOLA. [Over shoulder.] Can't. The Professor is ill.

MINA. Oh, how dreadful for you! Then you will have to be indoors in this close room all the afternoon. Such is life—devoted to art.

VIOLA. [Turning on stool.] Don't you *love* art?

MINA. I just adore it. Art for art's sake. It is my whole life! I could paint on and on forever. But just because we do so love our art, we should take the very best care of our health, don't you think so, Viola?

VIOLA. Oh, yes! Our very best physical strength should go into our art. [Begins to pound piano noisily.]

MINA. Does indoor life agree with you?

VIOLA. No, it makes me dumpy. [Yawns.]

MINA. Then you owe it to yourself and your art to go for a walk this afternoon, a long walk. [Gazing at her work from a distance.]

VIOLA. Go, all alone?

MINA. Certainly. I can't possibly go; I am under the influence of an inspiration. [Busily painting again.]

VIOLA. Oh!

MINA. And Mrs. Mac is out for the day with that dowdy old friend of hers. And we know no one here. You will *have* to go alone, Viola dear.

VIOLA. Well, then, I *will* go. I am sick of the smell of your old paints.

MINA. Are you really going, sweetheart?

Drawing-Room Plays

VIOLA. Yes; I really am, darling. [*Rises and yawns.*] I almost wish I had sent that —

MINA. [*Almost screams.*] Letter of introduction? Oh, don't say that! Would you have your working hours broken in upon by the frivolity of a man's conversation?

VIOLA. No; that *would* be dreadfully — disquieting.

MINA. Yes; disquieting is the word, and so few men are intelligent. You know we promised our mothers, if we were allowed to study here in town, we would have no society at all; and a man would be society.

VIOLA. I should say so. I feel that even *one* would be society. [*Putting on her hat, gloves and wrap.*] But that letter of introduction, you know, was to Newton King, who is the cleverest man in town. A real live author! I should like to meet him.

MINA. Oh, no; you wouldn't. He would just spoil everything for us. If you send that letter to him, I'll send the one *I* have to Mr. J. Morton Phillips, and you know how frivolous they say *he* is.

VIOLA. Oh! don't try to know him. Yes, I have heard he is frivolous, though he might not *seem* so.

MINA. I won't stand here another minute discussing those paltry masculine creatures. I must work while the light is good. My art is of the utmost importance. Good-bye, sweetheart; you are such a dear. [*Kisses her.*] Keep up good courage, my love, and when we are both famous, then we can afford to waste our time with men. Good-by, dear.

VIOLA. Good-by.

[*Exit VIOLA.*]

[*MINA listens until sound of door's loud closing is heard outside. In pantomime MINA then glances at clock, goes to mirror and rearranges hair. Picks up paint-brush and drops it.*]

Art For Art's Sake

MINA. Oh! I can't paint. I feel too conscience-stricken. [*She puts on ornamental Chinese blouse, removing her working blouse.*] Viola is too fatally attractive. If a man once met her, he would never let her alone afterward. [*Looks in mirror.*] She is ever so much prettier than I am! [*Sighs.*] Lucky for me, *very* lucky for me. [*Nervously rearranges room.*] And Mr. Newton King is so fond of music. She must not meet him. [*Closes piano with bang. Whistles speculatively.*] What a situation this is! [*Sound of door-bell is heard outside, and she stands listening until knock is heard at door, when she hurriedly resumes painting at easel. After taking position.*] Come in!

[*Enter MORTON PHILLIPS, whom MINA supposes to be NEWTON KING. He is in correct afternoon dress. Flowers in button-hole. Whenever she calls him MR. KING, he winces.*]

MINA. [*In simulated surprise.*] Why, is that you, Mr. King? Where did you drop from?

PHILLIPS. [*Smiling.*] People don't drop into heaven, do they? Well, at any rate, I am here. May I stay? [*Puts hat and stick on table and draws off gloves.*]

MINA. [*Studying picture.*] I suppose you will have to stay, now that you are here.

PHILLIPS. [*Taking comfortable rocking-chair, R.*] Thanks, and may I smoke?

MINA. Oh, yes; make yourself perfectly comfortable, Mr. King. I am under the influence of an inspiration which I must —

PHILLIPS. Catch on the fly?

MINA. How frivolous!

PHILLIPS. Work away. How I wish *I* were an artist, then I could paint you as you look now, in that lobster-colored thing!

Drawing - Room Plays

MINA. Lobster?

PHILLIPS. Before they're boiled, you know; and with that funny little pucker over the left eye,——

MINA. The lobster's?

PHILLIPS. Oh, pshaw, no! Your eye, of course. Tormentof! [*Walks over to her and takes brush out of her hand.*] What makes you so cold and distant this afternoon, Viola?

MINA. Conscience!

PHILLIPS. Cut it out!

MINA. For an author, you are the most frivolous man! I never imagined an author like you, Mr. King.

PHILLIPS. But you like me, nevertheless. You confessed it the last time I was here. What is your conscience pricking you about, my little artist? [*They sit on sofa, C.*] Because you have allowed me to come here often to see you, when your Chaperone and your friend are away so much?

[*MINA nods her head.*]

PHILLIPS. Well, that is not *your* fault. I am aware you would keep them at home, if you could. If they have to go out so much, that is their lookout, not yours.

MINA. Do you really think so, Mr. King?

PHILLIPS. I am sure of it, Viola!

[*At name she starts.*]

PHILLIPS. What makes you jump like that? Are you nervous? You see now, how you overwork, Viola!

MINA. Yes, I think I am overworked.

PHILLIPS. I suppose that first afternoon I called with the letter of introduction — you are not listening.

MINA. I am, too, listening, and if you don't go on I will paint you [*drawing paint brush down his nose*] a nice chrome yellow ——

Art For Art's Sake

PHILLIPS. Stop that, you little mischief. It is dangerous to do that to me. When I presented that letter of introduction which your mother's friend had sent me, that first afternoon I called here, you were cool enough. You even tried to send me away. I noticed that.

MINA. Oh, yes; I tried and tried — awfully hard!

PHILLIPS. I appreciate that! But I have come, and I've continued coming, and do you know why, Viola?

MINA. [*Covering ears.*] Oh, no; no, no; don't tell me! I won't guess.

PHILLIPS. [*Taking down her hands.*] It is because I love you.

MINA. [*In horror.*] You don't! You can't! Oh, no; say you don't mean it. It is not so.

PHILLIPS. I mean it, every word. I love you.

[*Door outside closes with loud slam.*]

MINA. [*Jumping up.*] Oh! Did you hear that?

PHILLIPS. Yes; it was only a door.

MINA. Only a door, Mr. King. It means that my friend is coming back. I hear her. She must not find you here. I — told her — I told her —

PHILLIPS. A lie?

MINA. Of course. Go, go. She is coming in here, I tell you. There is only one door. [*Walking about in great anxiety.*]

PHILLIPS. Well, what if she is? I don't mind.

MINA. Oh, quick, go hide! I hear her in the hall.

PHILLIPS. What of it, I am not going. [*Folds arms.*]

MINA. Yes, you are. [*Shakes him.*] You are going to hide. Quick, quick, in here. I can't face her — now — with you. There is not a minute to lose.

Drawing-Room Plays

PHILLIPS. [*Rising.*] Utter nonsense. Girls are queer cattle.

[MINA pushes him behind curtain, back L. Hands after him his hat, forgetting his stick on table.]

MINA. [*Breathing sigh of relief.*] Now, we are safe. I never knew her to be so long getting from the front door, in here. Sh-h-h-h!

PHILLIPS. [*Putting out head.*] I say, this is all nonsense, don't you know, Viola —

MINA. [*Stamping foot.*] Sh-h-h-h! Do as I say! [*She resumes painting.*]

[*Enter MRS. MACARTHUR, carrying an absurd number of very large parcels.*]

MRS. MAC. What, my dear, all alone? And working as hard as ever. Where is —

MINA. Sh-h-h-h! She's gone out. Why did you get home so early?

MRS. MAC. What do you mean by hushing me up like that? You strong-minded girls are always so impolite.

MINA. [*With dignity.*] We have to be impolite, or we would never get our work done. All artists have strong characters.

MRS. MAC. I know it. I know it, my dear, and I admire you for it. Art for art's sake, as you say. [*She puts parcels on table and, taking off wrap, slowly walks with it toward curtain L., where the supposed KING is. Just as she puts out hand, MINA turns and sees her.*]

MINA. [*Rushing to her and grasping hand.*] Stop! Stop! Oh, my dear Mrs. Mac., I'll hang it up for you. [*Goes in behind curtain with it. Speaks from there.*] What a pretty wrap it is, Mrs. Mac.! Oh, I must [*reappears*] get back to my work!

MRS. MAC. [*Who has walked down front to easel.*] If you don't treat me well, I shall not stay, then you will have to go home.

Art For Art's Sake

MINA. Oh! I know it, I know it, Mrs. Mac. You haven't any fault to find with me so far, have you?

MRS. MAC. [*Putting on glasses.*] It doesn't seem to me you have done much since I left. I don't like the looks of that green sky. That cow has the same underfed look as when I left.

MINA. Underfed? You don't want any impressionist cow to look coarse, do you?

[*PHILLIPS, in hiding, coughs.*]

MRS. MAC. What's that?

MINA. I'll see. The piano! It may be the piano. It often wheezes. [*Looks in it.*]

MRS. MAC. [*Admiringly.*] You artist people think of everything. [*Sits herself in rocking-chair and rocks back and forth, down front.*] I had a letter from your mother today.

[*PHILLIPS comes out back of her, but is frantically scared back by MINA. He will not go, however.*]

MINA. What did Mother say?

MRS. MAC. She said as long as I had good reports to give of you, and you studied hard, you could stay here in the city, but as soon as any men appeared—those were her very words—as soon as a man begun to hang around and take up your time with his nonsense, you would have to come home.

[*PHILLIPS goes hastily back behind curtain.*]

MRS. MAC. But I shall write her that such a thing is very unlikely to happen, you are such a sensible, industrious girl. Not at all the sort to attract men.

MINA. Thank—you—Mrs. Mac. [*Takes up brushes.*] [*MRS. MAC. yawns.*] You seem sleepy, perhaps you had better go and take a nap. I should love to have your company, but a nap is so beneficial.

MRS. MAC. So it is, very sensible, indeed. Why don't you take one? [*Rises.*]

Drawing-Room Plays

MINA. I? Oh, I can't, really. I am under the influence of an inspiration this afternoon.

[PHILLIPS sneezes.]

MRS. MAC. What a queer noise! We *must* get a cat. Rats always make me nervous. Well [*yawns again*], I'll go and take a nap. [*Walks back to bundles on table, looks them over and suddenly finds PHILLIPS's stick, looks suspiciously at MINA; then walks down front, carrying stick.*]

MRS. MAC. [C.] Young lady, what is this?

MINA. That? What? [*Takes it and looks it over curiously.*] Why, that is an old cane of my father's I brought along to measure distances with. [*Hands it back, after so using it, and resumes painting.*]

MRS. MAC. [*Looking at her closely.*] Very well. That is all right, then; but let me tell you one thing, young lady, if I find out that you are receiving gentlemen callers unknown to me —

MINA. Oh, you won't find that out!

MRS. MAC. I should hope not. If I find you are deceiving me, or making acquaintances unknown to me, I will [*rapping with cane*] —

MINA. O Mrs. Mac., what would you do? I really want to know.

MRS. MAC. Write your mother the details of your reprehensibility, and take you home instantly.

MINA. Horrible!

MRS. MAC. Here is your father's cane.

[*MINA takes it and pretends to measure distances with it, while MRS. MAC. gathers up bundles.*]

[*Exit MRS. MAC.*]

PHILLIPS. [*Rushing from hiding-place.*] There are moths in there and moth balls! Awful! They will josh me at the club.

MINA. Go back!

Art For Art's Sake

PHILLIPS. [*Pleadingly.*] Now, Viola, it is all rank nonsense, anyway, putting me in there. Please let me stay out, though I *am* your reprehensibility. Let me tell her all about us. [*Goes toward door.*] I'll say ——

MINA. [*Grasping him.*] No, you won't. She mustn't know you have been here in this way. She would never forgive us ——

PHILLIPS. I'll say I am Mr. King. I'll show her the letter of introduction.

MINA. [*Hands to head.*] No! No! Not that! Oh! What have I done! [*Wildly.*] And if you see her, I know you will love her best. No man could help it. I can't give you up. I can't give you up.

PHILLIPS. Of course not. *Don't* give me up. Don't worry. I never admire fat women.

MINA. Fat?

PHILLIPS. Isn't that Mrs. Mac., or other, a fat old thing?

MINA. Oh! You are so frivolous for a literary man, Mr. King!

PHILLIPS. I am glad of it. I am proud of it. I glory in my frivolity.

MINA. So do I. [*In half whisper.*] I didn't mean Mrs. Mac. I meant ——

PHILLIPS. Who?

MINA. [*Pause.*] My friend!

PHILLIPS. Oh, you mean Miss Archer! No danger of my preferring *her*. From what I have heard, I am sure I could never possibly stand that girl's family.

MINA. Oh! [*Throws herself on sofa in despair.*]

PHILLIPS. Now what have I done? What a loyal girl to your friend you are! I love loyalty.

MINA. Oh, go away!

Drawing - Room Plays

PHILLIPS. Go away? Now?

MINA. Yes, now! now! Wait! Don't you hear those voices? [*Both listen.*] Now, my friend really *has* come back. I hear her somewhere in the house.

PHILLIPS. Well, I don't care; what of it, Viola?

MINA. Oh! Everything of it. There is only one door—you will meet her! Hide! Hide!

PHILLIPS. I won't! I won't! I despise that place. Don't send me in there again. Those moth balls! Ugh!

MINA. For my sake—you must—for my sake!

[*Pushes him back into curtained corner, L. Resumes painting. Enter VIOLA, with hat yet on. She first puts head in, looks about, then comes in.*]

VIOLA. [*In secret manner, half whisper.*] Are you alone?

MINA. Oh, yes, I'm alone. Of course I am alone. Who could possibly be here?

VIOLA. Don't be cross, dear. [*Takes off her hat.*] Where is Mrs. Mac.?

MINA. Asleep.

VIOLA. Don't you feel sleepy?

MINA. Not a bit.

VIOLA. It is beautiful weather out.

MINA. Indeed!

VIOLA. [*Does an exercise on the piano, during which PHILLIPS peeps out.*] Don't you feel rather bored, in the house all the afternoon?

MINA. Not a bit. I am never bored.

VIOLA. You are so strong-minded. I wish I were your equal in devotion to art.

MINA. Thank you.

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VIOLA. Why have you got on your best blouse?

MINA. It is *not* my best blouse. [*Angrily, and looking toward PHILLIPS's corner.*]

VIOLA. It is, too.

MINA. It is *not*, I have *two* better ones.

VIOLA. Well, I've never seen them, and I have been your best friend for years, and I know perfectly well that you put on that blouse only when you want to make an impression on somebody.

MINA. [*Again looking toward curtain, where PHILLIPS hides.*] You are saying what is not true. I *could n't* fib the way you do. Nor should I wish to.

VIOLA. You like to wear that green thing and pose before the easel. You remember well enough last Sunday, when the minister called, you just *ran* into the other room to put it on, and he did n't —

MINA. Keep still. [*Looks again toward curtain.*] Keep still, I say. *What* is the minister to me?

VIOLA. Why are you staring in that corner?

MINA. I am not staring. [*Painting hastily.*]

VIOLA. Well, you are cross. Do go take a nap, dear — a nice, long nap. [*In a tone of cajolement.*] It will do you *so* much good.

MINA. I won't.

VIOLA. Take a walk, then. It will make your temper better, and —

MINA. I will not. My art is the first consideration.

VIOLA. [*Restlessly.*] You ought to have a studio, then, and not spoil our best parlor with the smell of your old paints. They smell like moth wax.

MINA. Then leave the room, if you don't like it. Why stay?

VIOLA. Because I've got to practice. [*Practices.*]

Drawing-Room Plays

VIOLA. [*Wearily.*] Oh, dear! [*Suddenly loses temper, bangs piano and rises.*] I should think you *would die*, sticking to this room so. And for my part, I hope you will. I hope you will.

[*Exit VIOLA, slamming door.*]

PHILLIPS. [*Coming instantly from biding-place.*] Now, what do you want me to do next, Viola?

MINA. [*Starts.*] *Don't* call me that! *Don't* say Viola again!

PHILLIPS. Great Scott! You never objected before. What shall I call you?

MINA. Call me darling, sweetheart, *anything* — but —

PHILLIPS. [*Joyfully.*] Oh, thanks! How awfully good of you! [*Starts to embrace her.*]

MINA. [*Plays with a button on his coat.*] Listen to me, now. That silly girl wants to get me out of this room for some reason, didn't you notice that? Perhaps she suspects you are here. She shall not have you.

PHILLIPS. Why, she has never even heard of me, you said — darling.

MINA. Did I say that? What things I say! Why, every one has heard of Newton King, the great author.

PHILLIPS. Darling! Viola, would you marry me, even if I were not a great author?

MINA. No, I would not. I *bate* frivolous men, unless they are authors. If I do marry you [*archly*], it will be only because you are a celebrated writer.

PHILLIPS. [*Ruefully.*] Really! That's not at all jolly. I should think a fellow himself could count for *something*.

MINA. Not at all, with an artistic soul like mine.

PHILLIPS. At the club, all the fellows say I —

Art For Art's Sake

MINA. Hush! She may hear you. I am sure she is coming back. When she does——

PHILLIPS. I won't go in there, where those moths are, again.

MINA. Not if I go with you?

PHILLIPS. Oh, well, that wouldn't be half bad! Let us hide, by all means. [*Taking her hand.*]

MINA. I will, if I hear her coming. We will both hide, and *then* I will find out why she wanted to get me out of this room. She never objected to my paints before—the provoking little bore!

PHILLIPS. I think I hear her coming now. Come on! [*Taking her hand again.*] Let us hide.

MINA. Wait a minute. I think——

PHILLIPS. Come on! Let us hide. I *want* to.

MINA. Sh-h-h-h!

PHILLIPS. I hear her! Let's get in here. [*He pulls her into recess down front R., a low screen or curtain between them and rest of stage, but leaving them in full view of audience.*]

[*VIOLA puts head in at door; finding stage empty, she withdraws, closely watched by couple in recess. VIOLA then returns, leading in by hand a grave young man. Amusement is seen of couple in recess. KING, whom VIOLA calls PHILLIPS, is dressed in a somewhat æsthetic way.*]

VIOLA. Sh-h-h-h! Mr. Phillips! We must be very quiet, you know.

KING. [*Loudly.*] I am perfectly willing to be very quiet, but I should like to know why. [*Seats himself on sofa.*]

VIOLA. [*Removing hat, and seating herself beside him.*] It is so odd, Mr. Phillips, how unlike your letters your conversation is. I love your letters.

Drawing-Room Plays

KING. I am glad to hear you say that, as it is through our letters that we have come to our present delightful understanding,—*isn't* it delightful?

VIOLA. Very—and the very first time I ever saw you, when you were standing in the music studio down town——

KING. Talking to the Professor——

VIOLA. Yes; talking so seriously to the Professor, when I came in, I knew right away, I *felt*—what lovely letters you could write.

KING. Just by my looks, somehow? I looked letter-like?

VIOLA. Oh, yes; and when I was told you were Mr. J. Morton Phillips, the well-known, frivolous young clubman—when I heard *that* name, you could have knocked me down with a feather.

[*PHILLIPS in recess laughs.*]

KING. I wouldn't have tried such a thing for worlds. I didn't look at all frivolous, then?

VIOLA. Oh, no!

KING. I don't act frivolous?

VIOLA. No.

KING. And yet, how I've tried!

VIOLA. You've *tried* to act frivolous?

KING. Of course; I had to keep up my reputation with you, you know. For instance—[*solemnly jumps over table*]. Isn't that frivolous?

[*PHILLIPS peeps over screen, MINA pulls him back.*]

VIOLA. Not at all, as you do it.

KING. Alas! Alas! I can't be frivolous. I've tried and failed.

VIOLA. But do be quiet!

KING. I will do anything you tell me, but why?

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VIOLA. You must know I have a very strict chaperone —

KING. [*Takes her hand.*] Who, I'm thankful to say, is taking her day off.

VIOLA. But she is asleep, in her room, and my best friend who lives with me, she is a very severe artist, very strong minded, and intellectual, and if *she* knew we were sitting holding hands like this, she would be *so* disgusted, I wouldn't dare to face her.

[*Couple in recess R. are holding hands when this is said. They are now seated.*]

KING. I'm exceedingly glad she isn't here. She must be a very disagreeable character.

VIOLA. And if *she* knew I had been meeting you in the street, and receiving letters from you — long letters from you, Mr. Phillips —

KING. It isn't your fault, little girl, I wrote them. *I'm* to blame for *their length*.

VIOLA. She would never forgive me, and they would write to my mother and take me straight home.

KING. Great Scott ! I will be quiet.

VIOLA. But you must go soon — go home soon and write me one of those lovely, lovely letters.

KING. I will — but first tell me — what it is you like most about those letters, their gaiety ?

VIOLA. I think that is it.

KING. I see ! They are more in the character of Mr. J. Morton Phillips. More like a frivolous, good-for-nothing young clubman.

VIOLA. Speak quickly, my friend might come in now at any minute.

KING. I am not afraid of her. I am afraid of you. My conscience gives me no rest. Tell me, my dear little girl, if I turned out to be a serious character after all, quite

D r a w i n g - R o o m P l a y s

other from what those letters show, would you love me just as well?

VIOLA. The idea! Of course not. How could that be, anyway. I like you as you are in the letters.

on KING. [*Groans.*] Great Scott! It is a judgment me.

[*In recess couple laugh. Couple outside drop bands quickly and sit on different ends of sofa.*]

VIOLA AND KING. What was that? [*Turning toward each other.*] I don't know.

VIOLA. My friend may come in. I can't tell her yet about you. Won't you please hide, until she goes out again?

KING. Why, if you wish me to. I am always willing to oblige. How does one go about it to hide?

VIOLA. I will show you. It will be lots of fun. [*Leads him to curtain L. where PHILLIPS first hid.*] Here is the very place. Such a cute place! [*Claps hands.*]

KING. In there! I don't see anything so very cute about it. I am sure those sheets will come tumbling down on my head.

VIOLA. What a lark that would be! You know you love larks — in your letters.

KING. Oh, I suppose I must be larky! I *will* be larky. Do you want me to go in there? Why?

VIOLA. Oh, I shall feel ever so much more comfortable when you're safely hidden. It will be such a relief.

KING. Thanks! I suppose in there you would consider me very larky.

VIOLA. Oh, yes, *please* go in.

KING. Ye gods, what sacrifices love requires of us! [*He goes behind curtain.*]

VIOLA. Now I will go and prepare Mrs. Mac. for my knowing you, and your being here. If she should come

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upon you suddenly, no knowing what would happen, and my friend, the artist, she might do *anything*.

KING. [*From behind curtain.*] I think I shall stay here, but one of those sheets is coming down on my head. It is a great lark, I suppose?

VIOLA. Oh, yes! Now I am going to find where my friend is.

KING. It is actually abominable in here, but I suppose that is to be expected in a lark. How long will you be gone?

VIOLA. Just a few minutes, Mr. Phillips.

[*Exit VIOLA.*]

KING. [*From behind curtain.*] Heigh-ho! The thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts!

[*MINA comes silently from recess R., crosses stage to door. Exit MINA.*]

[*PHILLIPS strides from recess R., rushes across stage, drags KING out of corner L. by coat collar.*]

KING. Help! Stop that! What is the meaning of this?

PHILLIPS. It is only I, old man. I recognized your voice. We've got just a minute. What are you doing here?

KING. Who put *you* in?

PHILLIPS. In here?

KING. Who hid *you*?

PHILLIPS. Miss Viola, Viola Blanchard told me to——

KING. Viola hid *you*, too? Why did she bring both of us? Why, why?

PHILLIPS. Quiet, man, it wasn't the same girl at all. Viola is engaged to me.

KING. Viola is engaged to me.

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PHILLIPS. Heavens, what do you mean?

KING. You, too, then she is false. Alas! But how I have deceived *her*! What right have I to find fault with her! I am a deceitful criminal.

PHILLIPS. Quick, how did you come here?

KING. It is all your fault. In order not to give you away, in your masquerade under *my* name, I have been masquerading under *your* name. But I had given you the letter of introduction. I had to meet her secretly — while you, you have evidently become a member of the household.

PHILLIPS. Viola has been meeting you secretly! O heavens! [*Striding about.*]

KING. Oh, that letter of introduction — I wish I had never given it to you! I wish I had never seen it! [*Striding about.*]

PHILLIPS. It was your idea, giving it to me. You said you had no time to follow up the new acquaintance of a silly girl; so I took it to save you the trouble.

KING. On the contrary, it was all your idea.

PHILLIPS. I say, the joke is yours. [*Shaking fist.*]

KING. You are to blame for the joke, such a lark little joke, and she is perfidious, for she has become engaged to both of us. Ah, woman, woman, in our hours of ease!

PHILLIPS. I won't believe it of Viola; it is the other one.

KING. [*Takes letter from pocket.*] Here is the proof. Here is the letter in which Viola promises to be my wife. [*PHILLIPS reads it.*]

PHILLIPS. [*Looking at letter.*] It is signed Viola Blanchard. O heavens! What you have said is only too true. She evidently wanted to marry the famous author, Newton King, and to make sure, she took both of us. [*He returns letter.*] What chance have I?

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KING. None at all. She likes my letters.

PHILLIPS. [*Threateningly.*] So you think me a good-for-nothing clubman, do you?

KING. On the contrary, I admire you. I admire frivolity. It is such hard work. [*Voices are heard, talking outside.*]

PHILLIPS. There she comes now. Go back to your hiding-place. Get back, I say. [*Pushes him.*]

KING. No, no! [*He struggles.*]

PHILLIPS. [*Releasing him, whereupon KING runs to recess down front R.*] I am going to see this thing out. I am going to see the finish, whether it is mine or yours. [*Voices.*] [*PHILLIPS runs back behind curtain L. where KING was hidden. Enter MRS. MAC., followed by VIOLA and MINA.*]

MRS. MAC. You girls are certainly too devoted to your arts. I never saw you in such bad humor as you are today. You certainly are overworked. [*Seats herself in rocking-chair.*]

MINA. I certainly am.

VIOLA. So am I. Suppose we both go for a walk now. Remember, art for art's sake.

MINA. Very well, I will.

VIOLA. You will?

MINA. Yes; I will get my coat now. [*Walks toward place where PHILLIPS is concealed, L. As she nears it VIOLA darts at her and drags her back.*]

VIOLA. Not — not in there.

MINA. Why not, Viola? Is there a burglar in there?

VIOLA. Oh, there might be, one can never tell! One can never be too careful. I will get your wrap.

[*VIOLA walks toward recess R. where KING is concealed. MINA rushes at her and holds her back.*]

Drawing-Room Plays

MINA. Not now. Don't go in there now. I say, don't go in there.

VIOLA. Ah! Perhaps there is a burglar in *that* closet, too!

MINA. How silly! Please go walking without me. If you ever loved me, dearest, *please* go walking without me,

VIOLA. I won't. I have been. You must go.

MRS. MAC. Are you girls crazy?

MINA. I think I am going crazy. [*Sinking on sofa and wringing her hands.*]

VIOLA. Don't do it here.

MINA. What shall I do? Mrs. Mac., do you disapprove of men?

MRS. MAC. I never thought of such a thing until I listened to you, and learned how frivolous, deceitful and selfish men are. No wonder you have vowed never to marry. [*Men both cough.*] What's that?

VIOLA. Yes; what was that? I can't imagine. Well, you never heard *me* say anything against men in general, did you?

MINA. You said they were liars——

VIOLA. Well, *you* said they were all alike, and deserved all the bad treatment they got.

MINA. [*Weeping.*] I never, never said that. I never meant it. I don't like all men, but I want one.

MRS. MAC. What? Viola! [*To VIOLA.*] What does this mean?

MINA. I like one. I am in love with a man and I am going to marry him.

[*From both hiding-places men come out. PHILLIPS is covered with sheets, and a skirt around his neck.*]

Art For Art's Sake

PHILLIPS AND KING. [*To room in general.*] Which one of us is it?

MRS. MAC. [*Screams.*] Burglars! Ghosts! Burglars! Help! Help! Leave me alone, you criminals, you! [*She jumps on chair as if they were rats.*] Help, we are being burglarized! Stop it! Stop it! Oh! Oh!

VIOLA. Well, one of them *is* a burglar! [*She darts at PHILLIPS, and removes the sheets from him, while MINA runs to KING, and stops in surprise.*] Oh! [*MINA crosses to PHILLIPS, VIOLA to KING.*]

VIOLA AND MINA. Oh! [*MINA throws herself on sofa down front.*] Oh! Oh!

PHILLIPS. [*Leaning over MINA.*] This is all nonsense, don't you know! Which one of us is it you want, Viola? Whom do you love?

MRS. MAC. There! He knows you, Viola. Disgraceful!

VIOLA. I never saw that man [*pointing to PHILLIPS*] before in my life.

KING. I am glad to hear it. I wish I had not.

PHILLIPS. [*To MINA.*] Choose, Viola! [*MINA only weeps.*]

VIOLA. Why do you call her Viola? I knew she didn't put on that best blouse for nothing.

KING. [*To VIOLA.*] Are you false to me, Viola? Have you not promised to marry me?

MRS. MAC. Viola, both of the burglars want to marry you. For heaven's sake, take one of them and let me get down.

VIOLA. [*To KING.*] I take this one, then.

KING. Quite right, my dear. I'll write you letters every day.

PHILLIPS. [*To MINA.*] What is the meaning of this, Viola? Tell me.

Drawing - Room Plays

MINA. [C.] Oh, I am *not* Viola, that is what it means—I am Mina Archer. *She* is Viola. And you can't bear the Archer family! Oh, will you ever forgive me? Will you ever forgive me? I am—so—artistic! It is all because of my artistic temperament.

PHILLIPS. You are Mina Archer! Great Scott, how jolly! Forgive you! Well, I guess—yes. But say, Mina, will you forgive me? I adore the Archer family. Will you ever forgive me?

MRS. MAC. Forgive him, Mina, for goodness' sake, and send him away. I want to get down.

PHILLIPS. Allow me to assist you.

KING. Allow me.

[*Both assist her down with great devotion.*]

MRS. MAC. Now, young people, what is the meaning of all this? It certainly does not look like art.

VIOLA. [*Throwing herself into MINA's arms.*] Oh, it isn't! It isn't art.

PHILLIPS. It simply means, Mrs. MacArthur, that King here and myself changed names, and in this masquerade of names made the acquaintance of these young ladies.

MRS. MAC. Who are you, sir?

MINA. Yes; who are you?

VIOLA. Yes; who are you?

PHILLIPS. I am only J. Morton Phillips, a good-for-nothing young clubman in love with Mina Archer.

MINA. Thank goodness! That fact clears my conscience.

PHILLIPS. Then you are really at last—Min-a!

[*They speak together L. by easel.*]

VIOLA AND MRS. MAC. [*To KING.*] And who, then, are you?

Art For Art's Sake

KING. I am Newton King, the author, and I *can't* be frivolous, but I wrote those letters to you, Viola!

VIOLA. Then, again, I am yours!

KING. That clears *my* conscience.

[*They speak together R. by piano.*]

MRS. MAC. [*Stands C.*] Well! Well! Well! And this, I imagine, explains Mina's father's cane. Well, I am glad you are not burglars. Perhaps under the circumstances I had better resume my nap. *My* conscience is perfectly clear.

VIOLA. No, no! Don't go! [*She runs to piano.*] We are all *so* much happier than just art for art's sake could make us. [*Begins popular air on piano, which all sing.*]

[*Curtain.*]



V.

PREFATORY NOTE

An attention to detail and stage-setting, in the presentation of the following play, should result in a realistic effect. The costuming should be in the latest fashion, and the personalities of the actors sufficiently graceful to help form attractive stage pictures. MAUD's manner should be that of a well-bred girl, by turns bored, irritated or troubled almost beyond control, while that of LAURA is vivacious in the extreme; she interlards her conversation with exclamation and gesture, and CLARIBEL is supposed to express the feline personality, soft, emotional and deceitful.

Drawing-Room Plays

CHARACTERS

MAUD BOWEN — *A popular and fashionable young "society woman."*

MRS. BOWEN — *Her mother.*

BLANCHE — *Her maid.*

CLARIBEL — *Her dearest friend.*

LAURA BURTON — *An intimate acquaintance.*

Scene I takes place in Miss Bowen's hotel sitting-room, at one o'clock at night. The lights are burning low. Blanche is asleep in an easy chair, C., near center table. The clock strikes one.

MISS BOWEN. [*Outside door R. C. back.*] Good night all! Yes, *wasn't* it a nice dance! Good night, Mr. Wellborn! Oh, you flatterer! I made it myself, fifty cents a yard. [*She laughs.*] No; I won't forget. Good night! [*During these remarks BLANCHE has awakened. She turns up lights and goes to door R. C., just as MISS BOWEN knocks. BLANCHE opens door. Enter MAUD BOWEN in full evening dress; she wears a handsome cloak, and holds bouquet of roses.*] [*Eagerly.*] Oh! Oh! What a beautiful time I have had! I never had such a perfectly lovely time in my life.

BLANCHE. You always say that after every dance, Miss Maud.

MAUD. But it is true. I do have the best times! Why, there is n't a girl in this hotel tonight but envies me. They all kissed me good night, and they all *hate* me.

BLANCHE. You must, indeed, have had a good time. But does Miss Claribel hate you?

MAUD. Oh, Claribel! Oh, no! [*She has thrown aside her cloak and sits in easy chair, C.*] Claribel is my one true friend, the one I can trust. She was not at the dance tonight. I wonder why!

An Intimate Acquaintance

BLANCHE. Here are your other slippers. [*She drops on knees with back to audience, while she removes MAUD's dancing slippers and puts on others.*]

MAUD. I did n't know how tired my feet were. [*Happily.*] I danced so much. Yes; I was the belle. The men quarreled over my dances. I must be looking unusually well tonight. Pass me the hand-mirror. [*Looks at herself in mirror.*] Yes, I am. This blue is particularly becoming—to my *ingénue* eyes.

BLANCHE. You will be going to bed now?

MAUD. In a few minutes. I have something to think about. [*Exit BLANCHE through small door L.*] I should think I had. Something rather pleasant, too! [*Looks in mirror again and hums tune.*] My seventh season and I am still good looking. I declare I *could* be taken for a *débutante*. The perennial *débutante*! That is because I neither stop to think nor—to fall in love. But don't I? That is the question. [*Sighs and lays down mirror.*] Men are fair game. [*She stands and yawns.*] I think they can protect themselves. [*Sits back of table, chin in hands, elbows on table.*] To let them fall in love with me is my privilege—no, my right. [*Picks up her bouquet of roses.*] I really like each one of them—for a time, at least. Even that is very kind of me. [*Looks at roses. Knock is heard at door R. C.*] Now, who may that be at this unconventional hour? Blanche!

[*Enter BLANCHE from door L., crosses stage and opens door R. C. LAURA BURTON stands there, also in evening dress. She rushes in.*]

LAURA. Oh, do let me come in!

MAUD. Why, you are already in, Miss Burton.

LAURA. [*Seats herself in rocking-chair.*] Oh, yes; but do let me stay awhile! Do ask me to sit down!

MAUD. Close the door, Blanche. [*BLANCHE obeys, and exit door L.*]

LAURA. Thank you ever so much for being so good-natured and urging me to stay, though I *know* you are

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sleepy. You look it. Oh! Why, you *have* wrinkles under your eyes at this time of night! I was talking about your wrinkles at dinner this very evening. [*She talks rapidly, at times a little breathlessly.*] Some of the men, you know what brutes they are, insisted you had wrinkles, if you had been up late, and I just told them that you had n't. Was n't that kind of me? You ought to have heard the way I "stood up" for you. Yes; I am always your friend, Miss Bowen—or Maud—*may* I call you Maud?

MAUD. You do, don't you?

LAURA. Oh, *thank* you! I always think of you as Maud, Maud *dear*! I always think of you in that way. [*Rocking violently.*] I knew you were still up—I heard you talking to your maid, and I just had to come in and talk over the dance with you. Were n't you just hoping some girl would come in for a little gossip? Don't deny it; I know you were. You don't know really how *fond* of you I am. When I first saw you that night you arrived, and saw you come into the hotel office, and stand there looking so lonesome and peaked and embarrassed, I said to myself, "That poor little thing! There's a girl I am going to stand by through thick and thin." And I do.

MAUD. [*Dejectedly.*] Do you?

LAURA. But tonight you had a really nice time, did n't you? Why, you were almost popular, you were, really. [*MAUD sits up, startled.*] It must be so nice to think it is worth while.

MAUD. To think what is worth while? [*She smells of her roses.*]

LAURA. Why, the effort to make oneself agreeable, and all that. Now, *I* am independent. It never seems worth while to me to make the vulgar effort to please.

MAUD. Oh, it is no effort to me to be agreeable!

LAURA. Oh! *Isn't* it? I've often thought it was, watching you.



An Intimate Acquaintance

MAUD. [*Angrily.*] You watch me, do you?

LAURA. How can I help it, when I'm so fond of you and when you always stand in such conspicuous places? [*MAUD openly and somewhat ostentatiously yawns.*] I noticed you, tonight, dear, standing under that chandelier in the big hall. All the other girls were sitting down, — I suppose the men had given *them* seats — but you didn't care. How nice it must be not to mind what people say! What is that in your hair? I noticed how it sparkles. [*She rises and bends over MAUD, examining ornament in her hair.*] Oh! Isn't it pretty! It looks quite real until one is close to it. [*Pats her on shoulder.*] You are so clever about your clothes. I suppose they cost you scarcely anything. [*She walks to mantelpiece and examines at length all the photographs. Picks up one and shows it to MAUD.*] Who is this man?

MAUD. [*Showing startled agitation.*] He? A friend of mine. Some one I used to know.

LAURA. I imagined as much. How clever you are! Now, dear, tell me his name. I've seen his photograph in so many girls' rooms.

MAUD. [*Trying to appear indifferent.*] Have you? Who has his picture beside myself?

LAURA. Now, dear, don't get excited. I can't remember exactly. I can't remember *all* the places where I've seen that man's picture, but I saw one first in Claribel's room.

MAUD. Claribel! Oh, yes, I gave it to her!

LAURA. All of them? Did you give her *all* of them?

MAUD. [*Rises nervously.*] How many has she?

LAURA. Well, she received the last one yesterday.

MAUD. [*Yawning with affected indifference.*] Did she? His name is Herbert Travers. I wonder why Claribel was not at the dance.

Drawing-Room Plays

LAURA. Oh! I remember hearing all about that Mr. Travers, though that was before *my* time; they say he broke ever so many hearts. He broke the hearts of all the girls who knew him. [*Sets herself again.*] So *you* knew that man. It must have been ever so long ago.

MAUD. Only five years. Claribel knew him, too.

LAURA. [*With little scream.*] Oh, Claribel! Is Claribel old enough for *that*? But she is no rival.

MAUD. [*Glaring.*] What do you mean?

LAURA. Plain English — and they call you clever! [*Leaning toward her confidentially.*] I mean, in spite of Claribel, you could have had that Mr. Travers.

MAUD. [*Haughtily.*] I did n't want him.

LAURA. And Claribel did n't, either. Strange, very strange! But there is no accounting for tastes. Claribel is far deeper than she looks. Do sit down and be comfortable. It is so nice and warm in here. [*Lolls back in chair.*] Isn't it nice sitting here and having this nice little gossip together! [*Rocks back and forth.*]

MAUD. [*Sets herself reluctantly.*] Are we gossiping? You merely mentioned Herbert Travers.

LAURA. [*Cries out.*] Oh! I mention him! I never even knew that old beau. So awfully interesting — your telling me all about him. I think you're entertaining, though some of the men *do* say you chatter. How do you like Mr. Livingston Smith?

[*Enter BLANCHE, at door L., and stands, looking at MAUD.*]

MAUD. [*Hopefully.*] Blanche evidently thinks it time for me to retire.

LAURA. [*Laughs.*] The idea! [*Turning to BLANCHE.*] Your mistress is not yet ready to go to bed. We have all tomorrow morning for sleep. No one who knows good form here appears downstairs before eleven o'clock. We have ever so many confidences to exchange yet. [*Exit BLANCHE.*] MAUD *drops back in chair, very*

An Intimate Acquaintance

evidently discouraged.] Livingston Smith is not half bad. [*Rocks back and forth.*] I noticed you danced with him three times. Don't worry, nobody noticed you but me. Some people do object to that queer side-step of his; it makes it much harder for him to get partners than it used to be. I've *heard* girls say they did n't want him to ask them to dance; now, it looks as if he could n't get any one else. It is a pity he is married!

MAUD. [*Languidly.*] Is he married?

LAURA. The idea! [*Staring at her.*] Did n't you know he was a married man? *What* a pity! Yes, he is separated from his wife, but he can't marry any one else. Many girls have been disappointed when they heard *that*.

MAUD. [*Snappily.*] I am not disappointed—to hear it.

LAURA. [*Soothingly.*] Of course *you* are not, though he comes of a very good family. You probably suspected something was wrong all along, and were quite prepared for *anything*. Of course you must have wondered why he didn't propose to you. Now Maud, dear, don't get angry with me for being the one to break the news to you.

MAUD. I am not angry.

LAURA. You look so, but I suppose that is not your fault. Do you know poor little Mrs. Bell? She has such a disagreeable expression, but they say inside she's quite, quite good-natured. Her sister married Ed James, whose first wife ran away with the coachman, though they say he was a very decent fellow, only he *would* drop plates.

MAUD. Drop plates? Who?

LAURA. Why, the coachman, of course; he was the butler, too. The James's always had to economize in some way. I'm sure if *I* were Etta James, I——

MAUD. [*Exasperatedly.*] I don't *know* Etta James!

Drawing - Room Plays

LAURA. [*With a little scream.*] Oh! You don't! How very odd! I will introduce you to her tomorrow. Everybody who is anybody knows Etta James. Now I will tell you what I came in here for, tonight.

MAUD. [*Eagerly.*] You will? Do.

LAURA. At least, part of what I came in here for, you dear! [*Flies at MAUD and kisses her against her will.*]

MAUD. Oh!

LAURA. First, of course, because I'm so *fond* of you, I just could n't go to sleep until I had talked over the party with you, and will you and Jim Wellborn go yachting with me tomorrow morning at eight o'clock?

MAUD. Why did n't you ask Mr. Wellborn himself?

LAURA. Simply because I know him too well.

MAUD. [*Picks up flowers.*] Ah! You know him too well!

LAURA. [*Curiously.*] Those are the flowers he gave you. I know it. Yes, I know Jim well—he proposed to me *first* at dancing-school. Poor Jim! I seldom have time for him any more. But I need not worry. [*Archly.*] We all know who has taken *my* place with him.

MAUD. Who?

LAURA. [*Playfully caressing her again.*] Who? Who is it? Why you, of course, you modest thing! He was too old for *me*. Did n't you know you were Jim Wellborn's latest?

MAUD. Am I? [*Helplessly.*]

LAURA. Oh, I heard your sweet nothings when you said good night to him at the door! Oh, you're a sly one! [*Shaking finger playfully.*]

MAUD. There were no sweet nothings. [*On the point of tears.*]

An Intimate Acquaintance

LAURA. Hush ! Don't get angry or I shall think you are jealous of me—his first love, you know. They say only first love is real nowadays. Well, at any rate, I know him too well to do anything but encourage his numerous love affairs. I would n't go alone with him tomorrow for anything. I would n't go *anywhere* with him alone. Won't you come with us?

MAUD. No, I won't.

LAURA. Oh! Very well! I suppose you would rather keep him quite to yourself, dear, while you've got him. After all I suppose it is the only safe way. [*Rising.*] Well, I must be going.

MAUD. [*Politely.*] Pray, don't hurry.

LAURA. [*Drops back in chair.*] I don't think I am. Now, dear, as one of your few friends in this hotel, I want to warn you, just because I am so fond of you. I—I—don't know exactly how to say it.

MAUD. Go on.

LAURA. [*Leaning forward confidentially.*] Now don't put too much faith in Jim Wellborn. For everybody knows what a fickle flirt he is. He always *seems* in earnest, but he—as he said to me last night—“I never can tell whom I'm going to feel drawn to next.” It is n't his fault, poor fellow. He inherited it. It takes a strong hand to manage him. Now, I really must go. No, don't urge me to stay. I really can't—another minute,—and now, good night, dear. [*Kisses her.*] And don't dream of that flirt all night, for really he does n't deserve it. And anything I hear of his saying I'll come and tell you. Good night, dear. See you tomorrow. *Good night.*

[*Exit LAURA.*]

MAUD. Oh! Thank goodness! At last she has gone!

LAURA. [*Unexpectedly puts head in at door.*] Don't go to bed for a few minutes, my dear. I am coming back to show you my pictures of Jim. I see you have n't any.

[*Exit LAURA.*]

Drawing - Room Plays

MAUD. This is awful ! [*Left alone, she drops back in chair as if overcome by sleep and boredom.*] O heavens ! And she is coming back !

[*Enter hurriedly from door L. Mrs. BOWEN in wrapper, hair in curl papers.*]

MRS. BOWEN. Maud ! Maud ! Go to bed ! What are you doing up at this hour ?

MAUD. How odd you look ! I never saw your curl papers before. Miss Burton came in after the dance. She talks too much.

MRS. BOWEN. A very well-behaved girl — *I* think. How did the dance go ?

MAUD. When I first came up from the ballroom I thought it had been a nice dance, and that I had had a splendid time, but now, after all she has said [*rising*], I feel — like — an *old — frump*.

MRS. BOWEN. Well, you will look like one if you don't go to bed. [*Seats herself.*] Was that Mr. Wellborn as attentive to you as usual ?

MAUD. Yes. More so than usual, I think ; and by the way, he proposed to me.

MRS. BOWEN. What ! He did ? I don't believe I half like it, either. I don't like his looks. Were his words unmistakable ?

MAUD. Quite. He proposed to me three times, distinctly, during the evening.

MRS. BOWEN. In plain terms ?

MAUD. Very decidedly. [*Yawns.*]

MRS. BOWEN. You refused him, of course ? I don't know the slightest thing about him. [*Yawns.*] Let us go to bed.

MAUD. But, mother, I have n't yet refused him. I am to write him his answer tomorrow morning.

An Intimate Acquaintance

MRS. BOWEN. Very proper of you, I'm sure.
[*Sighs.*] It is too bad he won't do. I suppose you know how you are going to refuse him politely?

MAUD. No, I don't.

MRS. BOWEN. Why, you can't marry a man who looks like that! And—why—Herbert Travers may come back. [*Sighs.*] *He was a man of family.*

MAUD. Was! Is—you mean.

MRS. BOWEN. Since that absurd affair of yours with him, I have often wondered if you would *ever* marry. It was silly of you to send Mr. Travers away, but if you wait awhile longer he may come back. I never give up hope, myself. It is *time* you married.

MAUD. [*Proudly.*] O mother! I may marry this other man. I have not decided—yet.

MRS. BOWEN. Nonsense! [*Coming close to her.*] You don't mean to tell me you have given up all hope of getting Travers?

MAUD. O mother! Don't!

MRS. BOWEN. Why, it was only five years ago. To be sure you have not seen him since. Come, go to bed.

[*Enter LAURA hastily with arm full of photographs. She stops on seeing MRS. BOWEN and gives both a keen glance.*]

LAURA. Were you discussing Jim Wellborn? Well, here are the many photographs of him, with which he has presented me during his long courtship. I have known him ever since he was a little boy, calling me pet names, swinging on my own back gate, and one doesn't get over love like that. He would make any one but Maud a most disagreeable husband, but she could manage him. She is just masculine enough. I am so feminine. She would have to hold a tight rein on him, of course.

MRS. BOWEN. My daughter is not going to marry this obscure Mr. Wellborn.

Drawing - Room Plays

LAURA. Obscure! Why, my dear Mrs. Bowen, he was one of *my* lovers! And he is the wealthiest man at home — in my home town.

MRS. BOWEN. What *you* would call a rich man, perhaps.

LAURA. A rich man! Why, he is a millionaire!

MRS. BOWEN. Oh! That's different.

LAURA. [*Showing pictures.*] Here is his home, and here is his boot and shoe manufactory — is n't it pretty, though *so* plebeian, and here are his oil wells! I would n't marry a man who got his money out of things like those.

MRS. BOWEN. [*Looking intently at photographs.*] I noticed when I met Mr. Wellborn that he had good manners. You said yourself, Maud, that he wore good ties. I remember I admired his coat.

LAURA. [*To MAUD.*] I'll give you one of my photographs of Jim. You're just dying for one, I can see. And I'll give you this one of his oil wells! And now I must go. I would n't come between mother and daughter in a discussion of this sort for worlds! Good night, darling! [*Kisses MAUD.*]

MAUD. Oh!

LAURA. I can get plenty more.

[*Exit LAURA.*]

MRS. BOWEN. [*Looking up from pictures.*] Well, I hope you have composed the words of your acceptance.

MAUD. Acceptance!

MRS. BOWEN. Of course, or did she — fib?

MAUD. No; he is very wealthy. I knew it all the time [*sighs*], even before I met him. [*Smells roses.*]

MRS. BOWEN. Then you have nothing more in the world to be worried about. I shall show these pictures to your father — *now*.

[*Exit MRS. BOWEN, with pictures, out door L.*]

An Intimate Acquaintance

[MAUD, *left alone, puts down roses, yawns and clasps hands behind head. Looks straight before her.*]

MAUD. Oh, dear! Oh, dear! It is n't money I want to care about—it is the man. I must trust him to love him. I wonder if what she said of Mr. Wellborn is true! [*She rises, walks to mantel, takes picture of Travers, and looks at it some time. She presses it to her lips.*] Herbert Travers! There was no doubt about your being true. You loved me devotedly. [*She drops picture slowly on the floor.*]

[*Enter BLANCHE at door L.*]

BLANCHE. [*Sleepily.*] Are you coming now, Miss Maud?

MAUD. Yes; now I am coming. [*Exit BLANCHE.*]
[MAUD *goes to table, takes up roses and buries her face in them.*] Oh, it is n't the money I want to care about, it is the man! [*She may either go off or wait until the curtain falls.*]

[*Curtain.*]

Scene 2 takes place the next morning at 10 a. m., in the same room. The stage is empty. Enter Blanche door L. She picks up bouquet of roses, admires them, puts them in vase. Takes photograph from floor, examines it, says, "That's a handsome man," and replaces it on mantel. Looks at herself in mirror and becomes interested. Rearranges chair and returns to mirror and prinks cap. Knock at door R. C. She goes to door, takes in tray of chocolate and toast; she places it on table C.

MAUD. [*In door L.*] Who was that, Blanche?
I am not at home.

BLANCHE. [*Goes to door L.*] It is only your chocolate, Miss Maud.

Drawing-Room Plays

MAUD. Very well. I will have it in there.
[BLANCHE *arranges cups.*] [Enter MAUD *wearing elaborate morning gown.*] I feel half dressed with no powder on my face. [Seats herself at table and sugars chocolate.]

BLANCHE. Is there anything you want?

MAUD. Anything I want? I should say so.

BLANCHE. I mean, is there anything I can get you?

MAUD. Not unless you can get me a completely made-up mind, untroubled by doubts.

BLANCHE. Oh, Miss Maud!

MAUD. I am trying to decide whether or not to marry a man.

BLANCHE. Oh, Miss Maud!

MAUD. I can't make up my mind, and I must—I've got to—within the hour. He is waiting downstairs now, for his answer. And he is a very good sort of fellow.

BLANCHE. Oh, Miss Maud!

MAUD. Yes; I must write him his answer and I don't know what to say. Put the flowers in water—you have, already? This chocolate is too weak. Take it away. Heavens! What immense pieces of toast! I have no appetite. Take it all away. [BLANCHE *carries out tray and re-enters.*] Now bring me pen, ink and paper. I know *now* what I am going to write to Mr. Jim Wellborn. [She writes, but tears up sheet, then sits nibbling end of pen.]

[Knock is heard at door R. C. BLANCHE *answers it, goes out, and returns, closing door carefully.*]

BLANCHE. [In half whisper, coming close.] Miss Burton wants to know if you will see her.

MAUD. Tell her I am asleep.

BLANCHE. I did. She told me to wake you. She said she knew you would see *her*. [Smiles.]

An Intimate Acquaintance

MAUD. Tell her I have gone for a walk.

BLANCHE. [*Opening door a tiny bit.*] Miss Bowen is very sorry but she has gone for a walk.

LAURA. [*Outside.*] Oh! Has she? I'm so disappointed. When she returns tell her I will call again about luncheon time. I hope she slept well.

BLANCHE. She slept very well. [*She closes door.*]

MAUD. Little prevaricator! But then you are paid to lie. I slept wretchedly. Girls should never sleep after a proposal. Now I will write my letter. I will say just what I decided to say. What was it? [*She writes busily.*]

[*Knock is heard again at door R. C.* BLANCHE goes to door. CLARIBEL calls over her head in a meek voice.]

CLARIBEL. May I, please, come in for a minute, Maud?

MAUD. Claribel! Of course you may. I am always glad to see you.

[CLARIBEL enters slowly and with very grave face. MAUD meets and embraces her. Exit BLANCHE. CLARIBEL is dressed with exaggerated sombreness, entirely in black. A black dress and small, quiet black hat.]

CLARIBEL. [*Solemnly.*] I met Laura Burton in the hall, she said you were here.

MAUD. She did, did she!

CLARIBEL. How bright and happy you look! [*Sighs.*] Some people are always that way. [*Takes out handkerchief.*] It seems almost heartless at times.

MAUD. What has happened? I never saw you like this before. Why were you not dancing last night? We had a lovely time!

CLARIBEL. I suppose you did, while I — was going through the most painful experience of my life. [*With marked emotion.*]

D r a w i n g - R o o m P l a y s

MAUD. Tell me all about it. Was it exciting?

CLARIBEL. [*Wiping away tears.*] Very! But I will tell you all, *all*, later. When I met Laura Burton she also told me that you were going to marry Mr. Wellborn. She assured me that the engagement would be announced tomorrow. [*Sadly.*] Let me offer you my congratulations.

MAUD. Oh, dear! I have not yet decided to marry him. I may not.

CLARIBEL. Yes, maybe you will refuse him. How cruel of you! [*Wipes away tears again.*]

MAUD. I am never cruel to you. What is the matter? [*Patting her cheek.*]

CLARIBEL. Let me alone. Let me weep!

MAUD. Of course I will let you weep, if you wish to, but I don't see how you can enjoy it so much.

CLARIBEL. Enjoy it? How can you say such a thing! Wait until you know all. I have thought and thought, and thought and thought, until my brain buzzes.

MAUD. Oh, then, pray don't think any more!

CLARIBEL. I must. Why, this is the very last time that we may ever be sitting thus, dear friends together, face to face.

MAUD. Dear me! I'm beginning to feel gloomy too. [*Wipes away tears. The two weep in concert.*] What is it all about, anyway? What *are* we weeping for?

CLARIBEL. You don't know, but I do.

[*Enter MRS. BOWEN, door L., dressed for going out, drawing on her gloves. She does not look up or see CLARIBEL.*]

MRS. BOWEN. I suppose you want all your things marked with a *W*, and one must begin to think of table-cloths.

MAUD. [*Rising.*] Mother!

An Intimate Acquaintance

MRS. BOWEN. Oh, Claribel, you here? Why, Claribel is almost like one of the family. We don't mind her. I don't like you in that dismal gown, Claribel.

CLARIBEL. I hate myself in it. That is why I put it on.

MRS. BOWEN. How queer girls are nowadays! Now, hurry and get that letter written, Maud. You must send the acceptance, for the trousseau will begin to come up this afternoon.

MAUD. Mother! Don't begin to buy my trousseau. I may never need one. I may refuse to marry Mr. Wellborn.

MRS. BOWEN. Nonsense! I won't listen to *such* nonsense. Do you prefer hemstitch or lace? Here, where's that tape measure? I have really forgotten your waist measure, and I am going to the tailor's. [*She measures MAUD for a gown.*] Now, stand still.

MAUD. Mother! Mother! If you act in *such* a hurry I never will be married.

MRS. BOWEN. Yes you will, *this* time. No more of that Travers nonsense this time.

CLARIBEL. O heavens! I have come to tell her something which may interfere with this wedding.

MRS. BOWEN. Then you may go. I must say you are a most lugubrious looking bridesmaid. How would a pale pink evening gown do, Maud, with spangles and tulle ruffling?

MAUD. I *would* like a new pink gown.

MRS. BOWEN. And then there are the cards to consider. Well, I will select you a new silk skirt this morning, and the wedding veil——

MAUD. Mother!

MRS. BOWEN. Now, be a good child. While you are writing that letter of acceptance or regrets or whatever

D r a w i n g - R o o m P l a y s

it is, I will be around the corner buying the wedding veil. Don't you interrupt her, Claribel.

CLARIBEL. [*Rising in agitation.*] But I must — I must interrupt her before she gets it written. It is my duty. I *must* do it.

MRS. BOWEN. Oh, you girls! You queer modern girls! I will leave you to talk it over, and plan the wedding. I know you will be all excitement. Good-by! [*Starting toward door.*] Don't stay long, Claribel.

CLARIBEL. Perhaps she will not let me stay after she hears —

MRS. BOWEN. Well, you are to be a bridesmaid, are you not?

CLARIBEL. Yes, if —

MRS. BOWEN. That is all I want to know. Now, Maud, remember, while you are writing that note I am around the corner buying the wedding veil.

[*Exit MRS. BOWEN, energetically.*]

MAUD. If I were only as impulsive as mother, I should know what to write. [*She takes up pen again.*]

[*CLARIBEL goes to mantel, takes up picture of Travers, and suddenly holds it before MAUD's eyes.*]

MAUD. [*Crying out and rising quickly.*] What, what are you doing?

CLARIBEL. [*Gloomily.*] Then you remember him.

MAUD. Remember Herbert Travers! How could I forget him?

CLARIBEL. Of course you could never forget *him*. [*Gloomily.*] Why don't you go on with your letter?

MAUD. Because — because — I don't know why. What is the matter with you, Claribel?

CLARIBEL. [*Bursting into tears.*] Nothing is the matter with me.

An Intimate Acquaintance

MAUD. Why do you bring up the subject of Mr. Travers?

CLARIBEL. Because he came back last night. [*She covers her face with her hands.*]

[*As MAUD stands staring at her, a low tap is heard at entrance door R. C., which neither of the two seem to hear. Enter LAURA BURTON dressed prettily in bright colors. She wears large leghorn hat covered with flowers. Carries flowers in her hand.*]

LAURA. Oh, you dear girls! I have been looking everywhere for you. What a queer dress to go walking in, Maud dear, but then I know tastes differ, and I suppose you will always find *some* people to overlook eccentricities! I met your dear mother in a shop, just now, around the corner. She was pricing bridal veils.

MAUD. [*Sitting down.*] Was she? I wonder for whom?

CLARIBEL. Don't, Maud, don't! Don't take it that way! [*Dries her eyes suddenly.*]

LAURA. [*Looking from one to the other.*] Is Claribel another one of Jim's sweethearts? I warned you, you know, Maudie, I warned you. But don't quarrel over him now, or I shall whistle him back, myself. How do you like my new yellow dress? [*She pirouettes before them.*] Don't the flowers in it, as they buzz by, nearly make you cross-eyed? You don't either of you seem a bit cheerful, and I suppose it would n't be polite of me to ask you why, though you are both such good-natured creatures one always drops formalities when with you. Perhaps you were discussing why Claribel was not at the ball last night? [*She speaks all this rapidly.*] Of course, usually, when a girl does not go to a ball it is because she has no partner, but, of course, in a hotel *that* does n't matter. Because one need n't mind, really, Claribel, coming downstairs alone, although I never do. And my partner always meets me on the landing. But then, of course, I am particularly lucky.

Drawing-Room Plays

CLARIBEL. Are you? I am not. I am the most unlucky girl that ever lived. And when my engagement is announced some of my best friends will never speak to me again.

LAURA. You *are* in the dumps. I would n't take him then. Girls often think their last chance has come, when he has n't at all. Don't get scared, and take a man nobody else wants.

CLARIBEL. I *am* frightened, but it is of a woman.
[*Looks at MAUD.*]

LAURA. Though perhaps in your circumstances I should feel the same way. Suppose you telephone to three men to take us three for a sail. Do.

MAUD. Oh, no, no indeed. Claribel is trying to tell me something.

LAURA. [*Seating herself.*] Well, don't mind me. What I hear goes in one ear and out the other. And I am such a good listener. Even very poor talkers can rely on me. Go on, Claribel. I am a woman's woman. I mean a girl's girl, and even when girls are at their dullest they interest *me* —

CLARIBEL. Thank you.

LAURA. That is, if —

[*Knock at door, to which all listen. BLANCHE crosses stage to door, and holds short parley.*]

BLANCHE. A bell-boy, Miss Maud, who says Mr. Wellborn sent him.

MAUD. With a message?

BLANCHE. No. He says he thinks there is one here for Mr. Wellborn. [*All laugh.*]

MAUD. Oh! Not yet. Tell him I will send it soon.

[*BLANCHE returns to door.*]

BLANCHE. Here are some flowers.

An Intimate Acquaintance

MAUD. Give them to me. [*Exit* BLANCHE.]
They are very sweet, anyway, just for their own sakes.
[*Repeats.*] They are very sweet.

LAURA. Well, isn't this a good joke on Jim Well-born, that I should be here when those flowers come up!

CLARIBEL. Why?

LAURA. Why, don't you see? None are so dull as those who wish to be. I will run down now and tell Jim all about it myself. He'll like it best from my own lips.

MAUD. Good-by!

LAURA. Oh, I will be back again! Now don't gossip any more till I get back.

[*Exit* LAURA.]

CLARIBEL. [*Hurriedly.*] We have always been chums, Maud, dearest chums——

MAUD. Yes, since we were little things in short dresses with "pigtails" down our backs. We went to school together.

CLARIBEL. And to our first dancing class, and we "came out" the same season——

MAUD. And as *débutantes* we used to sleep together and talk over our partners——

CLARIBEL. And say what sillies the boys were——

MAUD. [*Nodding smilingly.*] Yes.

CLARIBEL. Then Herbert Travers appeared. [*Sighs.*]
We met him the same night.

MAUD. Tell me, did he come back—dead? You act as if he might be—dead.

CLARIBEL. No. He is very much alive. I feel our friendship dying, that is all. Yours and mine.

MAUD. Why should our friendship die because he has come back? You love to be dramatic.

CLARIBEL. Cruel! Then Herbert loved you and told you so, and he did not care for me——

Drawing - Room Plays

MAUD. Of course not. [*Proudly.*]

CLARIBEL. But I was his confidante.

MAUD. And you were mine. I always have told you everything——

CLARIBEL. Yes, after you rejected him and he went away, I used to tell you how cruel you were to him, and how much too good for you he was, did I not?

MAUD. Yes; you always spoke well of him.

CLARIBEL. Promise me you will always remember that of me, even when I am far, far away.

MAUD. [*Happily.*] Yes. Isn't it splendid that he has come back again just now—at last!

CLARIBEL. Wait. After he had been gone some time you changed your mind.

MAUD. Yes, I did.

CLARIBEL. And at last one night you confessed to me that you wished to see him. You had found out, after all, that you cared for him.

MAUD. [*Taking Travers's picture and gazing happily at it.*] Yes, I told you so. I remember the night very well. You said then that you would write to him and let him know—that I wanted him—to come back. [*Sits.*]

CLARIBEL. Listen. I never wrote that to him! I never wrote that to him! [*Pause.*]

MAUD. [*At length.*] What? But you told me the letter was never answered.

CLARIBEL. It was. I wrote to him, but I did not tell him about your change of heart. [*Pause.*] I have been writing to him all these five years.

MAUD. [*Rising.*] You have been writing to him all these five years! And——

CLARIBEL. *He* has also been writing to *me*.

An Intimate Acquaintance

[*Silence ensues while CLARIBEL covers her face with her hands. MAUD walks slowly to fireplace. At length turns again to CLARIBEL.*]

MAUD. Of course we can never be friends again. [*Hoarsely.*] I feel quite—quite differently toward you.

CLARIBEL. I know it; you can never trust me again. Our friendship is dead.

MAUD. [*Stiffly.*] Yes, I loathe deceit. But before you go, answer me one question, please.

CLARIBEL. [*Rising.*] I will do anything you say. My conscience requires *that* of me. Do you care for him yet?

MAUD. Tell me one thing—why did you keep up this deceit for five long years, then come today, unasked, and confess it to me?

CLARIBEL. Oh! [*Drawing in her breath, sharply.*] Because he came back last night, and he—he—has asked me—to marry—him.

MAUD. Oh! [*Nods her head affirmatively, and turns away.*]

CLARIBEL. I am telling you the truth now. My conscience——

MAUD. Is he here in this hotel?

CLARIBEL. Yes.

MAUD. Now?

CLARIBEL. Yes. Maud, do you want to see him? [*Pause.*] Are you going to send for him? [*Clasping her hands, appealingly.*]

MAUD. I am not going to send for him.

CLARIBEL. When you meet him—perhaps in the halls, anywhere, are you going to—tell—him what I did—about the letter?

MAUD. I don't know.

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CLARIBEL. You see how I felt — as if I must tell you, before, before —

MAUD. Before what?

CLARIBEL. Before I said “yes” to him. [*Drooping her head coyly.*]

MAUD. He is waiting downstairs now for his answer?

CLARIBEL. Yes.

MAUD. Just as Mr. Wellborn is [*laughs*], how funny! Perhaps they are together. [*Laughs.*]

CLARIBEL. [*Anxiously.*] You want to see Mr. Travers? Shall we send for him?

MAUD. No.

CLARIBEL. What are you going to do?

MAUD. I really do not know. You don't propose, then, to tell him yourself?

CLARIBEL. Oh! Do you require *that* of me?

MAUD. No one but yourself can require *that* of you.

CLARIBEL. [*Wringing her hands.*] Oh! Oh, dear! [*Sits.*]

MAUD. Before you go I should like to say one thing more.

CLARIBEL. [*Rising.*] Are you going to send for him? Now?

MAUD. Before you go I must tell you——

CLARIBEL. Don't be so hard [*wiping away tears*] on me.

MAUD. That your services as bridesmaid will not be required.

CLARIBEL. Oh! [*She moves toward door.*] Oh, dear!

[*CLARIBEL hesitates near door and looks at MAUD, who turns back and looks into fire.* CLARIBEL

An Intimate Acquaintance

at door turns again, but MAUD remains obdurate. Exit CLARIBEL slowly, with bent head. MAUD sees that she has gone, takes Travers's picture, tears it into bits and burns them. Goes to table, takes up roses.]

MAUD. Women's friendships are sometimes rather —discouraging. [*She sits at table and writes letter.*]

[*Enter LAURA.*]

LAURA. Oh! Oh! What have you said against me to Jim? He will scarcely speak to me. He says I take up all your time. Girls are such jealous creatures! I suppose you thought it wisest to turn him against me. Perhaps it is —safer.

[*MAUD tears up note and writes another. Rings bell, gives note at door to boy.*]

MAUD. Give this note to Mr. Weliborn — he is waiting downstairs.

LAURA. You good-natured thing, not to keep him waiting another minute. Of course in our family we were taught that the longer one keeps a man waiting, the better it is for him. But I have often thought that queer little obliging way you have with men gives them much more *hope*. Do you always wear that sort of a gown all the morning? It really hangs very well if you were n't a little stoop-shouldered. [*MAUD involuntarily straightens herself.*] I don't blame you one bit for tearing up that Mr. Travers's picture. [*Looking at bits on the floor.*] I am sure the way to serve men of that sort is to ignore them. Where do you think you and Jim Wellborn will make your home? I hope it won't be too far away for me to visit you. I know you will keep house beautifully after you are married. I love to visit in a well-kept house. I am not a bit of trouble—just always on hand, you know. And I do attract the men so. It will be so nice for you. Dear me, you don't seem to realize at all that I am here. But I feel quite at home.

MAUD. I do know that you are here. I was just about to ask you if you will be one of my bridesmaids next month?

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LAURA. Which bridesmaid? How sweet of you to choose *me!* Most brides choose some one who will act as a foil. But I suppose you have passed the age of vanity.

[Enter Mrs. BOWEN.]

MRS. BOWEN. Well, my dear, I have the wedding veil.

MAUD. [*Eagerly.*] Oh, how good of you! [*Opens box.*] See! Isn't it pretty? [*She takes veil and throws it over her own head as she stands down front.*] *The King is dead, long live the King!*

[Curtain.]



VI.

PREFATORY NOTE

As may easily be seen, a presentation of this Chinese farce can be as elaborate as desired, or entirely without elaboration, depending upon the difficulty with which Chinese accessories may be secured. Attendants and music, for simplicity, may be eliminated in a drawing-room production, leaving little but the dialogue and costumes. However, all the details add greatly to the interest, and carried out would enhance the performance. To be amusing, an exaggerated burlesque manner should be used by all the actors.

The actresses should try to imitate the quelled, almost slavish, manner and mincing gait of the Chinese women, while the men should be much more active and forceful. In costumes, the brighter and handsomer ones should be selected for all but the slaves, and any Chinese costumes of gay colors will do. The stage should be arranged as a room in the house of WANG LIANG on his wedding day. It is a plain, almost bare, room, with a few chairs, tables and Chinese ornaments. Bright red paper scrolls hang on the wall, decorated with Chinese characters. There is a large entrance in the back wall, L. C., and a smaller door

Drawing - Room Plays

to the R., down front. To the right of the entrance, L. C., is arranged a shrine, which contains mock idols, offerings and burning punk. The "Spirit Tablets" are on the wall above the shrine. A row of chairs are all about the room against the wall, the row on the L. being arranged so that the audience can get a glimpse of all who sit in them. On the right side of the room is the long table set with Chinese dishes as for a feast. Chairs are along its left side almost in the center of the room. A high, decorated window, with a row of chrysanthemums or lilies growing in bowls on its sill, always gives a good Chinese effect, as do black chairs with red seats. An attention to the coloring of the costumes is necessary to a good stage picture, and it is well to avoid, as much as possible, any which are dark or unbecoming. Bright blue, green, pale yellow, pink or violet are, of course, the best shades.

The wedding feast of WANG and LOUIE SING, before it is interrupted, should be lengthy enough to give a realistic effect, and it is quite necessary that there should be Chinese songs sung and any other vaudeville numbers possible, introduced. One song repeated at the close would appropriately end the farce.

The Wedding of Mah Foy

CHARACTERS

CHUNG HOW — *A wealthy old Chinese of fierce temper.*

WANG LIANG — *A young Chinese merchant to whom Chung How has betrothed his daughter.*

KUANG YIN CHOW — *Chinese name of young Christianized Chinaman, known at the Mission as "Arthur."*

CHUNG MAH FOY — *A Christianized Chinese girl, known at the Mission as "Gertrude." She is the daughter of Chung How and has been betrothed by him to Wang Liang.*

LOUIE SING — *A friend of Gertrude's.*

CHUEY LING LOW — *Chinese girl in household of Wang Liang.*

Male guests or servants who have no lines.

Other maids to any number (in Chinese costume), not talking English.

Curtain rising discovers stage empty. Male servant crosses stage from door R. to larger door L. C. Exit servant. Enter at entrance L. C. female slave who goes to table and arranges tea set in trays which she has carried in. She bows before shrine, back, and with forehead to the floor, mumbles prayers in Chinese, then exit door R. Sound of Chinese music is heard in the distance, growing louder.

At entrance back L. C. Mah Foy is borne across the threshold by two female slaves who carry her upon their crossed hands. She is preceded by Chung How, who fans himself haughtily with small fan. She is followed by Louie Sing and a number of Chinese girls in festive costume. Chung closes fan with snap and gives vent to a string of imitation Chinese words. Slaves deposit Mah Foy in chair near table, C. She is closely veiled. Chung beats hand with fan and issues another order at which the slaves and guests, after bowing at the shrine, take seats against the wall, L., where they whisper together. Chung How prostrates himself before the shrine, then joins Mah Foy, C. Music ceases.

CHUNG HOW. My daughter, you now happily find yourself with your honorable father in the noble house of

Drawing-Room Plays

your future honorable husband, Wang Liang. This room you shall not leave, except as the happy wife of the noble and wealthy Wang Liang. I have said it. In a short time the great Wang Liang will enter this room and you will then become his humble wife. I have said it.

MAH FOY. My honorable father, I —

CHUNG. [*Fiercely.*] Be silent! Would you speak to your honorable father before he has commanded you to speak?

MAH FOY. I will *not* be the wife of Wang Liang.

CHUNG. Your noble father does not hear you. [*Raps her angrily with fan and strides up and down stage mumbling Chinese in anger.*] Dreadful creature, you have become as the wicked Christian maidens in this wicked land. You now insult your honorable father by disagreeing with him — peace be to our ancestors! [*Bows before shrine many times.*]

MAH FOY. I shall tell the honorable Wang Liang that, though I bow my humble head to the dew of the dust at his feet, I will never be his wife.

CHUNG. [*After excited gutturals.*] You are here. You will be his wife. What will save you, little toad at my elbow?

MAH FOY. I am not a little toad at your elbow — I am Gertrude, an American, and I will save myself.

CHUNG. [*Beside himself with rage.*] How? How? Save yourself! How? Yes, you are American-hearted and Chinese-headed. Why did my divine ancestors permit me to do this thing and allow me to send you to the great American Mission where they teach children to bring down the honorable gray hairs of their fathers to their honorable graves? [*Bows low before shrine and wails.*] [*To guests and slaves.*] I am in sorrow — do you not see, turtles who do not weep?

[*All wail in chorus, LOUIE SING leading. L.*]

MAH FOY. You all act foolishly. I am grown up. I shall marry whom I will.

The Wedding of Mah Foy

CHUNG. American! Then you will to marry Wang Liang, in this house in fifteen American minutes. [*He looks outside entrance, L. C., and tries window.*]

[*Music begins outside.*]

CHUNG. The hour has come.

MAH FOY. [*Rising from seat.*] O father, save me! I do not love this man you wish me to marry. It is not he that I love. O save me! I will marry nobody. I will but stay with my honorable father. [*On knees to him.*]

CHUNG. [*Rapping her on head with fan.*] Your honorable father does not wish you. Louie Sing [*to Chinese girl, L., near front*]! Louie Sing! Come here, little dove with wings.

[*LOUIE SING, in Chinese fashion, with head meekly bowed, shuffles near to him, making wide detour. She keeps her hands in her wide sleeves.*]

CHUNG. Now, wretched Mah Foy, look upon the Chinese maiden as she should be.

MAH FOY. [*Rising.*] Louie Sing has no reason to feel bad. Nobody wants to marry her.

CHUNG. Is that true, Louie Sing? Speak!

LOUIE SING. It is indeed so, great mandarin. I have no dowry.

CHUNG. Your father, Hop Yow, was rich man. What became of your dowry? Speak!

LOUIE SING. My honorable brother bought himself an honorable store with it.

CHUNG How. Your honorable brother can be found. I will honorably take the store away from him and give it to you. Your dowry shall belong to your future husband.

LOUIE SING. O most honorable benefactor, I humbly thank you! May your fragrant pagoda be thick with prayers forever. May your humble friend thank you.

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CHUNG HOW. Now, Louie Sing, tell Mah Foy that she should do as her marvelous father wishes. Speak, Louie Sing!

LOUIE SING. To her gracious father the Chinese girl should be ever obedient. Our ancestors have said it. You must obey, Mah Foy.

MAH FOY. My name is Gertrude. You are a coward, Louie Sing.

LOUIE SING. We must obey, Mah Foy. We must not do as American girls do, or we will suffer for it.

CHUNG HOW. You will be honorably killed. Exactly. Great is the wisdom of Louie Sing.

MAH FOY. Louie Sing has no reason to feel bad. Nobody wants to marry her.

CHUNG. Stop, turtle under my foot. You speak honorably a lie.

MAH FOY. So she told me, wise father.

CHUNG. Do you think that in truth nobody wants you, little dove with wings?

LOUIE SING. Nobody wants to marry me, I am too poor.

CHUNG. Did I not tell you I would take your dowry honorably from your brother and give it to your honorable husband? Somebody will marry you, Louie Sing.

MAH FOY AND LOUIE SING. Who? Oh, tell us!

CHUNG. I—even I—will be your honorable husband.

[*Silence.*]

CHUNG. Speak, Louie Sing!

LOUIE SING. I humbly thank your honorableness.

CHUNG. Speak, Mah Foy!

MAH FOY. She will make a good wife to you. I will not make a good wife to Wang Liang. I will pull his hair.

CHUNG HOW. Will you, Louie Sing, pull my hair?

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LOUIE. [*Bowing low.*] Oh, no!

CHUNG HOW. You will make a good wife. Now, little dove with wings, we will go, and Mah Foy will marry the great Wang Liang. The hour has come.

MAH FOY. [*On knees to him again.*] Oh, do not leave me here! Let me go home with Louie Sing, father.

CHUNG. I don't want you.

MAH FOY. I am but the humble flower of your own you trample upon. Oh, help your humble daughter, honorable father! I will do all else you say.

CHUNG. You will marry Wang Liang, or die. You will be no longer American after today.

MAH FOY. Oh, I am dying of fear!

[CHUNG claps hands and all guests and slaves stand in a row. He claps his hands again and they go to small door, R., talking Chinese jargon together. MAH FOY is still on her knees to CHUNG. At door a countersign in Chinese is given in loud voice and answered by voice from without. The door opens and guests and slaves exit.]

CHUNG. Go, Louie Sing. [*Exit LOUIE SING, R.*]
[CHUNG turns to MAH FOY.] And now will you see how your honorable father speaks the truth. You will be the wife of Wang Liang. [*Sarcastically.*] American!

[*Exit CHUNG door R.*]

[MAH FOY, left alone, tries other door, L. C., and window. She stops and listens to music which is heard outside. She listens at small door out of which her father went, then rushes back to seat with gesture of despair.]

[*Enter KUANG YIN CHOW disguised as WANG LIANG, from small door R. He is dressed in handsome Chinese robes. She does not look up and her veil is dropped so as to conceal her eyes. KUANG bows before shrine and walks all around her.*]

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KUANG. [*Clearing throat.*] H-m-m-m-m! [*Repeats the sound.*] The crystal-eyed Mah Foy does not wish to marry the great and honorable Wang Liang?

MAH FOY. No. I hate him. I will not marry Wang Liang.

KUANG. But the honorable Mah Foy has forgotten the riches of the honorable Wang Liang. He owns tea plantations in China. He is a rich man.

MAH FOY. I am the dust under his feet. I care not for riches; I will tear his hair.

KUANG. Wang Liang can buy for you a house such as Americans live in, you may have slaves to bring you tea, you may have purple and yellow robes like the sun. You may honorably become so rich that even Ho Yow's wives will hate you.

MAH FOY. That would be a pleasure too great for such as I. [*Bows.*]

KUANG. [*Bowing low.*] As Wang Liang's wife the dust of Chinatown need never soil your silk shoes. You may watch the world from a high window. You will honorably have all the money you want.

MAH FOY. I want no money. I don't want Wang Liang.

KUANG. Why not, O crystal-eyed Mah Foy?

MAH FOY. Because I already love another.

KUANG. You are a Chinese girl, and yet you dare to love. O shades of my ancestors! Who is he that you love? I will find him and——

MAH FOY. Kill him? You cannot. He is a Christian. He lives at the Mission—you cannot get him there. His name is Kuang Yin Chow.

KUANG. Known to the Christians as "Arthur"? That low coolie, son of an actor—he is unworthy. I scorn his humble name.

MAH FOY. I care not. He is the man I prefer to Wang Liang. We have met at the Mission. I would

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rather be his lowly wife than the first of the slave wives of Wang Liang, who look on the world from their high windows.

KUANG. Stop, girl, be still !

MAH FOY. I would have run away and married him had my father not brought me to this noble house. I hate you, Wang Liang.

KUANG. Stop, girl, be still !

MAH FOY. [*Repeats.*] I hate you, Wang Liang.

[*He takes her by the wrist and leads her forcibly down stage to L., front.*]

KUANG. Keep still. We have a witness. [*Points to door, R.*] Your honorable father is there on his honorable knees watching us through the honorable keyhole.

MAH FOY. He hopes to see me marry you. Oh, help me ! I will not go near the shrine !

KUANG. The shrine means nothing to you, for you are Christian. Come, go through the ceremony with me there. After it is finished thy honorable father will leave the honorable keyhole and go away, then I will let you go to the Mission.

MAH FOY. Ah ! Most honorable Wang Liang !

KUANG. Come ! Come to the shrine with me, go through the ceremony, then you may go. I swear it.

[*They approach the shrine and bow low before it many times offering prayers, etc., before the "spirit tablets." They both then face audience and he pours for her a cup of wine which they drink together out of the same cup. Both rise.*]

KUANG. [*In a loud voice.*] Now honorably we have become man and wife. [*A moment's silence.*] I think I heard your honorable father get up from his honorable knees and go away.

D r a w i n g - R o o m P l a y s

MAH FOY. I heard him. He has gone for my dowry. Let me go now.

KUANG. The beautiful Mah Foy forgets that one courtesy is due the honor of her humble host. She has not raised her veil yet. Raise it before you go.

[She raises her veil so that she sees his face for the first time.]

MAH FOY. *[Crying out.]* Kuang! It is you, Kuang!

KUANG. Yes, I am Kuang Yin Chow. I have come to save you. *[They embrace.]*

[Enter CHUEY LING LOW at door R., bearing gifts of small boxes and vases in her hands. She approaches KUANG and bows low before him.]

MAH FOY. Who is this girl? I have never seen her before.

KUANG. To me also she is a stranger. Who are you, strange woman? Speak!

CHUEY. You are the great and noble Kuang Yin Chow?

KUANG. That is my name. But if you betray my humble presence here you do great wrong. How did you know who I was, strange girl? Speak and tell us. Do not fear us. How knew you I was Kuang?

CHUEY. *[Timidly.]* As you honorably stole in through the guests dressed as the bridegroom I saw your face and I knew it was not the face of Wang Liang. I knew it to be the magnificent face of Kuang Yin Chow.

MAH FOY. Is this girl, then, your friend, Arthur?

KUANG. I never saw her before. *[To CHUEY.]* How knew you my face? Who are you?

CHUEY. I am your wife.

MAH FOY. *[To KUANG.]* Your wife! Then already you have a wife? Is she your wife? Oh, I am tired of husbands! I will leave you.

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KUANG. Stop! Mah Foy, my wife, obey me! Stay here by me or all is lost. Will you obey me?

MAH FOY. [*After looking him in face a moment.*] I will obey you.

KUANG. [*To CHUEY.*] Girl, who you are I do not know, but this other girl here, Mah Foy, this is my wife, I have no other.

CHUEY. Oh, yes! [*Bows.*] I am your wife. Here are gifts I bring you, my husband.

KUANG. [*Turning abruptly away.*] I do not want them. Take them away. [*CHUEY weeps loudly.*] What a dreadful time is this for a weeping woman to come! I am disgusted.

MAH FOY. So am I.

CHUEY. O cruel and great Kuang, do you not remember many months ago when you were a noble friend to the honorable and wealthy Wang Liang?

KUANG. Yes, I remember that time. I am no longer his friend.

CHUEY. [*Weeping again.*] Oh! Oh!

KUANG. [*To MAH FOY.*] Stop her, can't you?

MAH FOY. How did you know my husband?

CHUEY. [*Bowing to MAH FOY.*] I, the humble Chuey Ling Low, never knew the great Kuang Yin Chow but from my window in his passing. I was given to him by the great Wang Liang to be his humble wife. He never came for me. He will not take these, my humble gifts. [*Weeps again.*]

MAH FOY. You had forgotten this present of a wife from Wang Liang, Arthur?

KUANG. Yes, Gertrude, I had forgotten. I never saw her. [*To CHUEY.*] We are Americans. I do not want you for a wife.

CHUEY. [*Weeping.*] Oh! Oh!

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KUANG. Shades of my ancestors! Stop her!

MAH FOY. Be at peace, Chuey Ling Low. We must go. The time is short and my husband and I must go to the Mission before the noble Wang comes.

CHUEY. [*Weeping.*] Oh! Oh! I have no husband! I have no husband! [*She drops gifts on the floor and sits by them.*]

KUANG. What shall we do with her?

MAH FOY. [*To CHUEY.*] Do not tell that you have seen Kuang. We must go now.

CHUEY. [*Sets up louder wailing.*] Kuang! Do not go! Do not go! O Kuang!

MAH FOY and KUANG. Hush! Stop that noise!

CHUEY. If you go I will follow weeping loudly. It is the custom, I am scorned by my husband.

MAH FOY. He is not your husband.

CHUEY. He *is* my husband.

MAH FOY. What must we do?

CHUEY. All day since Wang say I am to be wife to Kuang I sit at high window waiting, waiting for Kuang, my husband to come. He does not come. He does not see me. He does not know my unworthy face. I watch him humbly in the street. He walk up and down. He nobly talk with other Chinese. He speak flower talk to children. He does not know my face. I humbly wait. He does not honorably come. Today I see him enter this great house. I come downstairs. I see him walk proud through wedding guests and secretly enter this room, dressed to be my bridegroom. I walk upstairs. I get my humble presents for him. I enter here and find Kuang Yin Chow, but he knows not my humble face. [*Weeps again.*]

KUANG. [*Seating himself in despair.*] Oh, stop her!

MAH FOY. Listen, Chuey Ling Low. You may come with me. I will take you with us to the Mission. Will you go?

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CHUEY. Go—for a walk?

MAH FOY. Yes, go for a walk with me. I will take you to a place where many will be kind to you. Will you go?

CHUEY. Yes, I will go. [*Dropping gifts in disregard.*] I will go for a walk. It will be good.

MAH FOY. Then be quite still and do as I say. You may sit down at the table now and eat.

CHUEY. I humbly thank you, great lady.

[*MAH FOY leads her to table, R., where she sits eating.*]

MAH FOY. Now, Kuang, I think we may escape and take your friend with us.

KUANG. She is not my friend, cruel one. I do not know her.

MAH FOY. But she knows you.

KUANG. We have not time to quarrel now. The guests will be coming soon to congratulate us and feast. Wang, himself, may be here at any moment.

[*Knock at door R.*]

MAH FOY. Ah, what shall we do?

KUANG. Fear not. Enter, slave. [*Enter three slave girls bearing four large Chinese boxes which they set down at the feet of KUANG.*] These magnificent boxes hold the humble dowry of the honorable Mah Foy? [*Slaves bow low.*] They have been graciously sent by her honorable father, the great and good Chung How, to Wang Liang? [*Slaves bow low.*] You are graciously permitted to depart. Tell the great Chung How I place my brow under the dew of his robes in the dust.

[*Slaves bow and exit.*]

CHUEY. [*At table.*] Kuang Yin Chow takes all gifts but mine. He scorns my humble presents. [*Begins to weep.*]

KUANG. Oh! Oh!

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MAH FOY. [*To CHUEY.*] Stop! Don't make such a noise!

[*CHUEY gets down off of seat, gathers up her presents, gives them to KUANG. KUANG accepts them.*]

CHUEY. Now he will marry me. All is well. [*She returns to table to eat.*]

MAH FOY. [*Laughing.*] Poor water chrysanthemum! Poor flower of the Chinese household! She does not know I am your humble wife.

KUANG. But soon, when we leave her at the Mission, she will know. [*He takes MAH FOY's hand.*]

MAH FOY. Let us go now. Let us hurry away before Chung How comes back.

KUANG. That is not so easy. The house is full of Wang's friend's and your father's. We must plot our way out.

MAH FOY. I will do as you say.

KUANG. Greatest of Chinese virtues you show. Let us first look in your boxes.

MAH FOY. [*Clapping hands.*] Let us look at my dowry. I am dying of curiosity. [*They open boxes, displaying silks, jewels, money, etc.*] Oh! Oh! They are beautiful!

CHUEY. [*Stealing to her and taking her hand.*] What your name?

MAH FOY. My name is Mah Foy.

KUANG. Listen. We will take as much as we can away with us. Do as I do. We will take them to the Mission.

MAH FOY. Chuey, you may have some of these, too.

CHUEY. Oh! Oh!

[*The three take silk handkerchiefs and, filling them with jewels, money, etc., put them in their long sleeves.*]

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CHUEY. See! See! This beautiful pair of small silk shoes!

MAH FOY. You may have them. They are too small for me.

CHUEY. [*Joyfully.*] Oh! Oh! [*Puts them in her sleeves.*]

KUANG. These jewels are priceless. Ought we to take them?

MAH FOY. Are they not my own, my husband? We will be rich forever. Great is my father, Chung How.

CHUEY. Look! Look! The little box of paper flowers! Oh, the little box of paper flowers!

KUANG. Give them to her to keep her still.

MAH FOY. You may have them, little Chuey Ling Low.

CHUEY. And the little gold hair ornament?

MAH FOY. Yes.

KUANG. We do not want all these silks. They come from China. The scent of the sandal wood is strong.

MAH FOY. [*Holding silks in hand.*] They mind me of my dead mother's boxes which came in the great ship with her from the Flowery Kingdom.

KUANG. Do not stop to dream, Mah Foy.

CHUEY. Oh! Oh! [*Decks herself with tiny ornaments.*]

KUANG. [*Opening last box.*] This is all we can carry. We must plan now to get away. [*He closes boxes. At this moment door R. opens silently and LOUIE SING appears.*]

MAH FOY. It is Louie Sing. She is the first to congratulate me, for she is to marry my father. Do not speak, Chuey Ling Low.

Drawing-Room Plays

[CHUEY stands in absolute silence back of MAH FOY.]

LOUIE. The faithful Louie Sing comes first to congratulate her beloved friend, Mah Foy, upon her happy marriage. Who is that girl?

MAH FOY. That girl is Chuey Ling Low. She is my new servant.

CHUEY. In my sleeves are money and jewels. See! [*She shows them.*] I have money and jewels. I am the wife of Kuang Yin Chow.

KUANG. Silence, Chuey Ling Low! Do not speak again. [*She relapses into intense silence again.*]

LOUIE SING. It is well to have many servants and one so gaily dressed, too. I congratulate Mah Foy upon her happy marriage. [*Bows low.*]

MAH FOY. The happiness of Mah Foy is indeed unexpectedly great.

LOUIE SING. And great may the happiness be of Wang Liang. [*Bows low to him.*] Then there will be no hair-pulling at this wedding, Mah Foy?

MAH FOY. Where is your honorable future husband, my noble father?

LOUIE SING. My honorable future husband went to his honorable home to send your dowry to the noble Wang Liang. He has not returned. Many may be the days of Mah Foy and the honorable Wang Liang.

KUANG. Say not Wang Liang, but rather Kuang Yin Chow. Louie Sing, if you are a friend to Mah Foy, help us to escape from here. I am not Wang Liang.

MAH FOY. He is Arthur. He is my husband, Kuang Yin Chow.

LOUIE. Oh, then he will be killed! Chung How will kill him with a carving-knife.

KUANG. I do not intend to be killed by Chung How with a carving-knife. We want to escape to the

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The Wedding of Mah Foy

Mission with Mah Foy's dowry. You can help us, Louie Sing.

[*He takes the veil from MAH FOY's head and throws it over LOUIE SING's.*]

KUANG. Be the bride for Mah Foy's sake, Louie Sing, and marry Wang Liang in her stead.

LOUIE. Is Wang Liang a young man?

KUANG. He is.

LOUIE. Is he a rich man?

KUANG. He is a very rich man.

LOUIE. Is he younger than Chung How?

MAH FOY. He is younger than Chung How.

LOUIE. I have long wanted a husband. I will marry Wang Liang for Mah Foy's sake.

MAH FOY. [*Embracing her.*] I thank you for your great self-sacrifice for my sake, Louie Sing.

[*Music is heard without.*]

MAH FOY. The wedding guests are coming.

KUANG. Do not fear, but do as I say. Now, Louie Sing, play your part.

[*LOUIE SING takes MAH FOY's place, C., as bride, with veil over her head. MAH FOY, followed by CHUEY, goes to corner near door R. behind table. She keeps fan over her face, or turns back as she pretends to eat. KUANG bows before shrine back. Enter wedding guests door R. talking Chinese jargon. They take seats, as before, along wall L. Music. KUANG now joins MAH FOY. Door L. C. opens and enter the true WANG LIANG magnificently dressed.*]

WANG LIANG. Welcome, noble guests. You do honor to my humble hut. The radiance of your exalted countenances is as sunshine to the darkness of my poverty. I am the bone your dog refuses. [*Bows low.*] The time for the worshipful marriage ceremony has now ar-

Drawing-Room Plays

rived. I see sitting here the honorable Chung Mah Foy, but where is the great Chung How? [*To LOUIE.*] Mah Foy, your worshipful father tells me that you are not eager for this honorable marriage.

LOUIE. As my worshipful father bids me do, I do.

WANG. Greatest of Chinese virtues is obedience to the master of the household. You will make a good wife. We will wait no longer for Chung How.

[*He takes hand of LOUIE and leads her slowly back to shrine where they bow many times before tablets, saying over innumerable prayers. They then turn to audience and drink from same cup, as did KUANG and MAH FOY, but all at greater length. At moment when WANG and LOUIE SING drink, KUANG and MAH FOY, followed by CHUEY with money in sleeves, go to small door R. CHUEY loudly gives countersign in Chinese, an answer is returned, small door R. opens. Exit KUANG, followed by MAH FOY.*]

CHUEY. Oh! Oh! Do not leave me behind.

[*Exit CHUEY.*]

WANG. Who went out?

LOUIE. My friends, Wun Lung, his wife and her servant.

WANG. I command you, Mah Foy, to lift your veil.

[*LOUIE lifts her veil.*]

WANG. [*Looking at LOUIE.*] Ah, a nice little number I have drawn in the lottery! She is somewhat younger than I was led to expect—stouter, too, and much more meek. Are you meek, little peacock with eyes?

LOUIE. I desire to do the will of my husband.

WANG. You please me. The wedding guests may now approach and congratulate us. My honorable guests, I command you to congratulate us.

The Wedding of Mah Foy

[*The wedding guests now come forward one by one. Each in turn bows before couple, talks Chinese jargon, bows before shrine and goes to table where all find places. Men seated first, women waiting on them. Last, WANG and LOUIE join them seated, head of table facing audience. A song should be given here and other appropriate entertainment. All pour tea and eat. At length WANG speaks words of Chinese and all raise small cups of wine to drink bride's health. At this moment entrance L. C. opens and enter CHUNG HOW.*]

WANG. Here comes my honorable father-in-law; the honorable mandarin is always in time for the honorable feast.

CHUNG. [*Bows first before shrine, then speaks.*] How? Who? What is this? Where is Mah Foy? Where is my daughter?

WANG. I have just married your worshipful daughter, honorableness. Has the ceremony so changed her face?

CHUNG. Where? That is not my daughter. That is my future bride, Louie Sing. Where is my daughter? I will find her. I will kill her. What do you there [*to LOUIE*], little dove with wings?

LOUIE SING. I do as my husband says. I am the humble wife of the noble Wang Liang. Mah Foy is not here. I am the bride.

CHUNG. Oh! Oh! Oh! Mah Foy shall not escape me. I will find her. I will take the dowry home with me. This dowry belongs to me. [*Goes to boxes C. and tugs at them.*]

WANG. [*Rising from table.*] Not so, honorable Chung How. [*Bows.*] This dowry belongs to me.

CHUNG. You have lost me my daughter, you have married my wife, my little dove with wings, would you take also my money and jewels?

Drawing - Room Plays

WANG. You promised to give me one wife with dowry, here is the wife and there is the money. I care not for your daughter. I thank you, honorable Chung How, for this dowry.

CHUNG. The little dove with wings has no dowry. Her honorable brother honorably stole it. In these boxes, because I am a great man, is money to the amount of many thousands, jewels from China of priceless value.

WANG. Then I will keep them, dust as I am under your great feet. Slaves! [*Two slaves join him at boxes C.*] Bear these boxes away.

CHUNG. Stop! They belong to me. Slaves! [*Two of his own slaves approach.*] Bear these boxes to my home.

WANG. Stop! First I will take out the dowry.

CHUNG. No, no!

[*WANG and CHUNG have prolonged struggle over boxes, to the terror of the guests present. WANG is victor. He takes one box and empties it on the floor. Nothing comes out but one silk garment and an American alarm clock.*]

WANG. Hah! So this is the great Mah Foy's dowry! [*Curiously examines clock which goes off.*]

[*CHUNG talks Chinese excitedly, turning all boxes over on the floor. Nothing is left in them but silks and a few large articles, including an American chromo which WANG holds up in derision.*]

WANG. This is a fine dowry.

CHUNG. [*With forehead to floor.*] Oh! Oh! The honorable dowry is gone. The money is all gone. My money! My money!

WANG. The magnificent boxes hold nothing that I want but this honorable clock. I will keep the boxes. [*To LOUIE SING.*] Grieve not, little peacock with eyes, I will keep you, anyway.

The Wedding of Mah Foy

CHUNG. [*With Chinese jargon.*] Gone, gone! Mah Foy's dowry has been stolen. [*Begins to wail.*] [*To slaves.*] You little toads in the pond! Don't you see I am in sorrow? [*Slaves also wail.*] [*Fiercely walking about.*] I have been dishonorably robbed. Where is my knife?

LOUIE SING. [*Coming from table and bowing before him.*] I beg of your worshipful honorableness to forgive us, my husband, and me who am the dust under your feet. Your daughter has taken her money and gone away to the Mission with Kuang Yin Chow.

CHUNG. Oh! Oh! The dowry is gone. I will kill Kuang Yin Chow. I will kill him tonight at eight o'clock. Louie Sing, come with me. [*Grasps her by her wrist.*] Come with me, Louie Sing! I will give you the money when I get it.

WANG. Stop! [*Holding her by other wrist.*] This is my little peacock with eyes.

CHUNG. Hist! You get no gracious dowry with her. I will help you out of a bad scrape. I will take her back to the home of her honorable father.

WANG. No, Chung How. Do not take her back to her home. Out of the goodness of my heart I will keep her. Leave her here in my house. As a wife she is not bad. As a wife I think she will do very well.

CHUNG. [*Dropping her wrist.*] Oh! Oh! Oh! I have lost a wife! I have lost a little dove with wings! My daughter is to blame for this. I will find her. I will find Mah Foy.

WANG. Chung How! By the way, if you find Mah Foy, do not bring her again to my house. I do not like her—she has too little dowry.

CHUNG. Oh! Oh! Mah Foy! I will not keep you, either. I will kill you. I will kill Kuang and I will get the money back. Where is my knife? Mah Foy! Mah Foy!

D r a w i n g - R o o m P l a y s

[Exit CHUNG wailing; two slaves follow him also wailing.]

WANG. Well, I have the clock. Chung How is growing older every day. *[He resumes seat at table.]* I think I prefer this wife, anyway. *[To LOUIE.]* Little peacock with eyes, we will now have our wedding feast.

[Music is heard, feast begins again.]

[Curtain.]



VII.

PREFATORY NOTE

Especially designed as a setting for songs, the actors in this skit should be excellent singers. The first selections should be light or lively, and one song, or duo, being a love-song with dramatic possibilities; the last should be sad, the girl expressing in these quite as much feeling as the man.

Drawing-Room Plays

CHARACTERS

SOMERVILLE BURTON — *An actor out of a job.*

A FAIR UNKNOWN — *Who must sing.*

The scene is a poor room in a players' boarding-house. The furniture consists of a couch, R., down front, screen in back corner, R., table C., piano down front, L., two chairs. An oil-stove is conspicuous, about which are socks drying. A faded old coat hangs on piano. There are other signs of disorder, theatrical costumes on chairs. On table is a chafing-dish. Also on table are a pair of trousers with flat-iron on them. Sound of splashing in water is heard coming from behind screen.

VOICE. Jim-in-y Christmas! Cold as the Klondyke! Brr-rr-rr-r! [*Whistles popular air "In the Good Old Summer Time!"*] Stops suddenly to chatter with cold.]

[*Enter from behind screen, BURTON, wearing big patched bath-robe. His hair is tousled.*]

BURTON. Courage, Somerville, old boy! Summer's coming, even if it is a long way off. [*Whistles to it.*] Ugh! What a cold night! Another blizzard! Might as well be on the Dakota plains as in New York. Another bliz—great Scott! [*Pounces on flat-iron.*] Another hole in my trousers, and it is the only pair I own. Somerville, old boy, henceforth be your name Winter—for this is the Winter-r-r of your discontent! What is life to an actor without an engagement—and with only one pair of trousers—presentable! [*Presses them with iron energetically.*] At last I strike the lowest round on the ladder of my theatrical misfortunes. I have reached the chafing-dish stage. What have we for dinner tonight, slaves? [*Raises lid of chafing-dish.*] Bacon! Bacon! Ugh! I can't look a pig in the face nowadays! I will save

M u s i c H a t h C h a r m s

those two pieces of bacon for breakfast. To bed! To bed! Perchance to dream! [*He sits huddled up on the couch.*] Now feed your imagination, Somerville, old boy, it is gaudier than bacon. Imagine yourself, now, at this minute, seated at dinner with that radiant creature you saw in her box last week. A wealth of dark hair she has, and the sort of laughter in her face which means she would help a fellow out of a scrape. And that blue gown, ah!—oh! How hungry I am—what a blue she wore! Imagine yourself tonight beside her eating—chops! O chops! Chops! Chops! [*With voice of longing.*] [*Knock is heard at door. BURTON whistles until knock is repeated.*] Who is that? Come in, why don't you? [*He throws shoes angrily at door.*] Come in!

[*Door opens suddenly and the girl in blue appears, beautifully dressed, wearing jewels, with opera cloak and carrying satchel. She stands smiling on the threshold.*]

BURTON. 'Tis she! 'Tis she! In a vision, but without the chops.

SHE. Chops? May I come in, please? It is cold out in the hall. [*She enters and carefully closes the door behind her.*]

BURTON. Halt! [*She stops, half smiling.*] Are you a vision or are you real?

SHE. I am very real. I am also cold.

HE. Then you may stay.

SHE. [*Pushing aside wrap and coming down front.*] Please forgive this [*laughs*] intrusion into your—your—study.

HE. Study! [*Tries to hide drying socks.*]

SHE. Young man, where is your wife?

HE. Wife? Wife—did you say? [*To the room.*] Now would n't that effect you! I deny the scandal. What have I done that you should thrust a wife upon me? [*Fiercely.*] I don't deserve one.

Drawing - Room Plays

SHE. Probably not ! Few men do, but they get them all the same. I don't like that stove. You should have one of those new registers, you know, the ornamental sort with ——

HE. A cash register ! Would n't be a bad Christmas present for me.

SHE. Why don't you have a carpet for your floor ?
[*Sets down satchel.*] Men are so careless.

HE. Yes, I lost mine.

SHE. Don't be cross—it is not my fault. Your chairs need dusting. I suppose you have n't time—why, I'll dust them for you. [*Does so with her handkerchief.*]

HE. Say ! Sssh ! What is in that satchel ? Something to eat ?

SHE. [*Staring.*] Something to eat ! The idea ! How odd ! [*She sits at piano and warbles, "In the Good Old Summer Time."* He, in pantomime, expresses his amazement at her presence.]

HE. [*At conclusion of song.*] Don't mind me, make yourself quite at home.

SHE. [*With shyness for the first time.*] Thank you ! You are very kind. I—dear me, your piano, too, what a bad housekeeper you are !

HE. Young woman, whoever you are, blown in on the wings of the blizzard, I don't know.

SHE. Nor care !

HE. Or how you got here in such a storm ; but there is one thing I should like to explain——

SHE. [*Archly.*] You, of course, owe me an explanation.

HE. If I had a decent suit of clothes, I should go over behind that screen and put them on—in your honor.

SHE. [*Pointing gingerly to trousers on table.*] What's that ?

Music Hath Charms

HE. I burned a hole in them, trying to — trying to —

SHE. Oh, you poor fellow! Don't mind me. I like your bath-robe.

HE. What a relief! O dream, continue!

SHE. What did you say?

HE. Chops! Chops! Chops!

SHE. What?

HE. [*Fiercely.*] None of your business.

SHE. Oh, dear! Anyway I shall wait in here until my carriage comes. If you object to my company you may get behind the screen.

HE. Your carriage!! May I smoke?

SHE. No. Of course I came in my carriage. Whose did you suppose I should come in?

HE. Not mine.

SHE. Why, I could n't walk a foot of the way outside in such a blizzard as this. My coachman set me down at the wrong address — he is such a boundah.

HE. A what?

SHE. A boundah!

HE. You must be anglicized.

SHE. No, I am a débutante — of three seasons. Listen to me — young man, I have telephoned home, and as soon as the carriage gets there, it will be sent back for me. Meanwhile — I am hungry.

HE. What? I'm a little deaf.

SHE. H-u-n-g-r-y.

HE. I am not a telephone. Do you live far?

SHE. Rathah!

HE. What's that?

Drawing-Room Plays

SHE. Rathah ! I'm so hungry.

HE. Oh ! Oh !

SHE. What's the matter ? I see you have a chafing-dish [*rising*], and——

HE. Oh ! Oh ! Oh !

SHE. How queerly you act ! I will have supper with you.

HE. Oh !

SHE. You may cook it for me on that chafing-dish.

HE. Oh !

SHE. Stop that ! I am being just as polite as I can be in this trying situation, and you——

HE. So am I.

SHE. No, you are a regular brute. [*She weeps.*]

HE. Great Scott ! [*Rises and yawns, then disappears behind screen.*]

SHE. Oh, dear ! Why, he has gone. Perhaps it is just as well, but then I can't have any supper. [*Opens chafing-dish and eats pieces of bacon.*] What a dreadful situation I am in ! [*With cheeks resting in hands.*] In this strange place with a man I have never met ! But I have seen him somewhere before. I remember those kind eyes, and that sympathetic smile. Where was it ? I shall never let mama know about this. What's that noise ? Oh ! He may be coming back. Well, I hope he will, for I am scared to death. But I must not let him know I am afraid. I will carry it off with a high hand. But I will never, never try to drive out in a blizzard again with a new coachman. And if I ever do get to my home alive, I will never, never leave it again.

[*BURTON comes from behind screen, wearing theatrical costume of some sort, possibly that of Romeo.*]

SHE. [*Screams.*] Oh ! Oh ! Here are my jewels ! [*Hurriedly drags them off.*] Where is your weapon ?

M u s i c H a t h C h a r m s

HE. I don't want those — why should you fear these kind eyes, and this sympathetic smile?

SHE. Oh! It is you. I am so glad.

HE. Those are the sweetest words I ever heard.

SHE. And now we shall have supper. Here are the salt and pepper, and the vinegar-bottle — and the alcohol-bottle, and — but where is something to cook? [*Looks in chafing-dish.*] Bacon! I never eat bacon.

HE. Then don't. It is my only contribution to our supper. Save it. [*He sits at piano, and sings rollicking song, while in pantomime she looks about room and gives a nod of comprehension of his poverty.*] Young woman [*shaking finger at her*], listen to me.

SHE. I won't.

HE. You must. If your carriage gets back at all in this storm, it will be a wonder. Didn't you wander about in cold halls, and by dark rooms, before you saw a light here —

SHE. Yes.

HE. And, terrified, decided at last, whoever was in here, to throw yourself on his mercy rather than freeze to death?

SHE. Yes. [*Holding out both hands.*] Thank you for the warmth of your fire.

HE. But I can do no more for you. I am starving. I have n't even a penny to buy bread.

SHE. Oh! I am so sorry.

HE. Are you really?

SHE. Oh, yes! I remember now where I saw you before. It was in the theater.

HE. Don't remember. After tonight we shall never meet again. You will go back to your idle luxury, and I to my — starving. Meanwhile let us sing!

SHE. Yes. We shall sing. [*They sing together.*]

Drawing-Room Plays

HE. You make me forget that I am hungry.

SHE. Oh, do I? I am glad. I was going to a fancy dress ball tonight, but I shall not get there in time. I will do my part for you, now, if you like. [*With assistance of satchel, turns herself into another character. She sings song. Chance here for vaudeville.*]

HE. [*At close.*] I like you best in that dress—you do not seem so far above me.

SHE. What do you mean?

HE. Nothing! Sing again! Why should I mean anything? Sing for me.

SHE. You are giving me my orders, sir?

HE. You must do as I say.

SHE. Well! [*Laughs.*] For tonight, why not? [*They sing sentimental song together. At close, he speaks.*]

HE. I wish you had not come.

SHE. Thank you.

HE. I know now how a fallen angel must feel looking over the wall into Paradise, where the blessed spirits walk about within, quietly, not thinking of the poor wretch outside. I am the poor wretch outside. But, after all, we are only two human beings, you and I. [*Walks close to her.*] I want to tell you—I love you. [*She exclaims and draws proudly away from him.*] I love you.

SHE. Oh, no, you don't! [*Stamps her foot.*]

HE. I do. I——

SHE. Stop! How cruel of you to say that to me, here——

HE. I cannot help it.

SHE. I am frightened. You *must* help it.

HE. We are equals, just for an evening, you and I. Just for an evening—out of all our lives. If—if—I *know* that I could make you love me—were we——

Music Hath Charms

SHE. No! No! No!

HE. Look at me. Speak to me. There is nothing to fear of me but my poverty. Look at me.

SHE. No! No!

[*She hastily puts back into satchel apron, cap, etc., which had transformed her, and resumes her usual appearance.*]

HE. [*Going toward her.*] It makes no difference. I love you.

SHE. [*Holding up hand.*] This must not be. [*She goes to piano and sings a song of farewell. The lights grow more and more dim, and the voice lower. At length lights go out, in darkness. Silence ensues. The lights come up again showing same scene as at first—BURTON, in his old bath-robe, huddled up on the couch.*]

BURTON. Strange dreams come to a fellow, when he is hungry. [*Rises and yawns, stretching. Goes to chafing-dish and raises lid.*] All that vision of loveliness on two pieces of bacon. I don't even remember having eaten them. It is a tormenting dream. I can't forget it. I should like to forget it. One must n't indulge in dreams like that,—on an empty pocket; it is [*suddenly picks up satchel, which she has left*]*—she was here. It was she. She came—she was here, and I—drove her away. [Starts toward door with it.] Out in the storm!*

[*Curtain.*]









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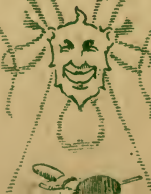
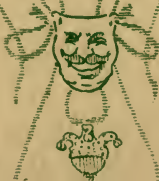
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